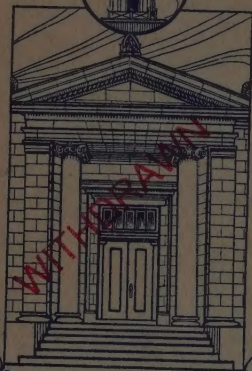


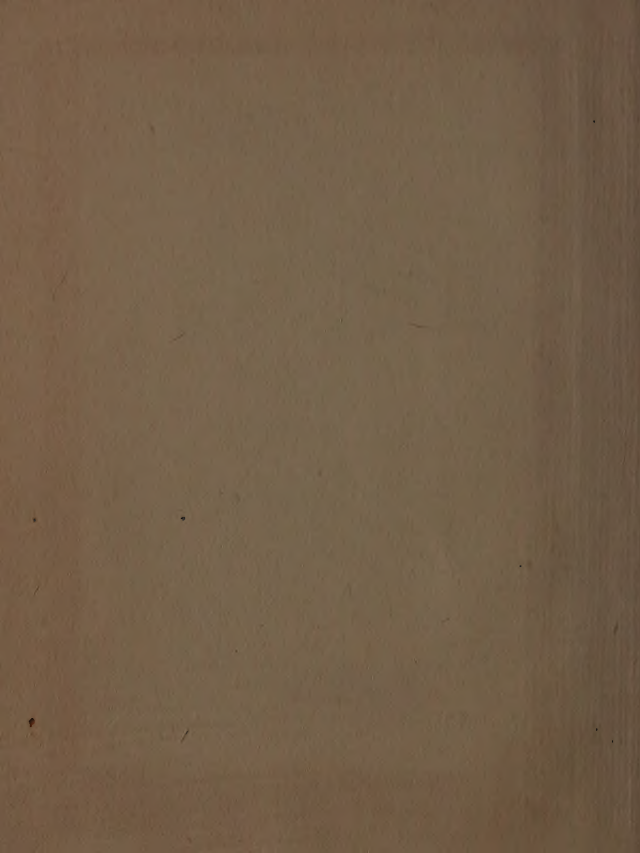
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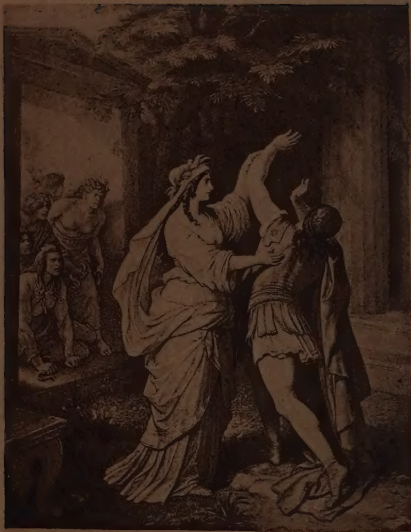
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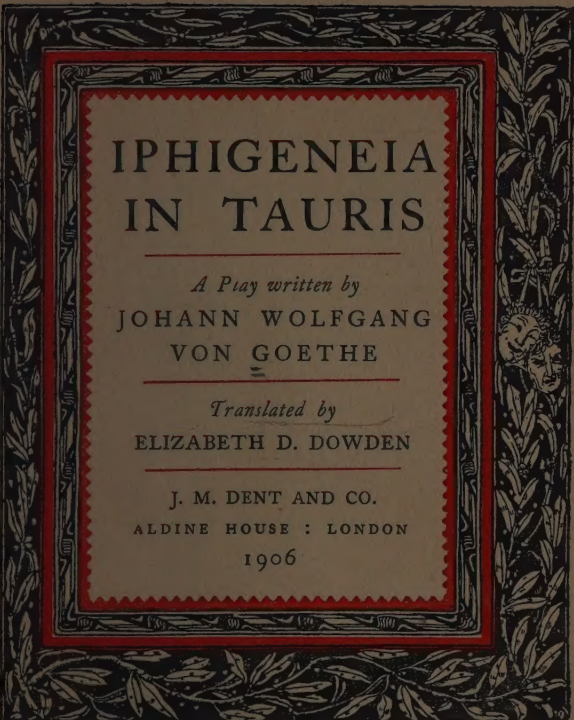
THE TEMPLE DRAMATISTS
IPHIGENEIA IN TAURIS





Act III. Sc. I. M 237-249

*After
Wilhelm von Kaulbach.*



IPHIGENEIA IN TAURIS

A Play written by
JOHANN WOLFGANG
VON GOETHE

Translated by
ELIZABETH D. DOWDEN

J. M. DENT AND CO.
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INTRODUCTION

THE *Iphigeneia in Tauris* has been described by a distinguished French critic as 'the highest effort of spiritual abstraction' in dramatic literature. It certainly moves on the highest level of moral feeling attained by the greatest poet of the last three centuries. And as a work of art, possessing a warm and living body of beauty, it is perhaps his creation with the best claim to be called flawless.

The drama belongs to the earlier years of Goethe's residence at Weimar. The first idea of the drama may have arisen in his mind in 1776, when he was in his twenty-seventh year, but the statement of Goethe from which this inference has been drawn was made in his old age to Riemer, when his memory sometimes played strange tricks. It is certain that he began to dictate the poem on February 14, 1779, and that, although distracted by various pieces of public business, it was completed in its first form—that of a rhythmical prose—on March 28, 1780. At Schwalbenstein, near Ilmenau, the fourth act was written (March 19) in a single day. On April 6, a private representation of the play was given at Weimar in honour of the Duchess Luise's birthday; the actress Corona Schröter took the part of the heroine; that of Orestes was presented by Goethe.

Thus, in a far greater degree than with certain other works of Goethe, the drama had the advantage of a swift development; there was no piecing together of fragments belonging to various periods; the whole has a crystalline unity. 'The printed words,' he said in 1827 to Eckermann, 'are indeed only a faint reflex of the life which stirred within me during its invention.' But the *Iphigeneia* had also the advantage of careful revision. In 1780 it was thrown somewhat hastily into irregular verse; in 1781 it was again re-handled, more fully and more carefully, in prose. Five years later Goethe announced an edition of his collected works, in the third volume of which the *Iphigeneia* was to appear. He proceeded to transform the prose into verse, which, under the influence of Sophocles, became more regular and finely wrought than that of 1780. When, filled with new hope and joy, he took his flight to Italy, in September 1786, he carried with him the manuscript of his play: on the Brenner he chose out this, from among other manuscripts, to be the special companion of his travel. At the Lake of Garda he listened to 'the dull sound of the ceaseless waves,' of which the resonance is heard in the opening monologue of Iphigeneia in lines added in the final revision. At Verona, at Vicenza, in Venice, he worked upon the prose text, finding it grow from day to day in beauty and in harmony. At Bologna he stood before the St. Agatha of Raphael, so virginal and calm, yet so warm with life, and free from all austerity, and he vowed that no word should be uttered by his Iphigeneia which might not have been heard from the lips of Raphael's saint. In Rome the final revision was completed as the year 1786 was coming to its close. Goethe's 'Child of Sorrow' (*Schmerzenskind*),

Iphigeneia in Tauris

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as he called the play, was sent to Weimar in January 1787, and was printed, as he had designed, at Leipzig, in the third volume of his works in the same year.

An *Iphigeneia in Taurica*—the Tauric Chersonese, which we now know as the Crimea—is among the works of Euripides. It is a play of more animated external action than that of Goethe, a drama of stirring adventure, telling the victory of Greek craft over the Barbarian, craft aided and justified by divine interposition. The choric passages are many and beautiful, but these are not always an aid to the action of the drama. In spiritual, and what may be justly named religious beauty, it can enter into no competition with the work of Goethe. With Euripides, as with Goethe, *Iphigeneia* has been saved from sacrifice at Aulis, and has been borne away by Artemis to the Tauric sanctuary. There, as Priestess, it has been her wont to prepare by initiatory rites such Greeks as had been discovered on the coast, for slaughter by other hands than hers at the shrine of the Goddess. She has been visited by a dream which convinces her that her brother Orestes is dead. But he and Pylades, his comrade, have in fact landed on the Tauric shore, in obedience to the command of Phoebus, with the design of seizing the image of Artemis, and bearing it to Greece, as the appointed means for obtaining deliverance from the pursuit of the Furies, who still harry and torture the matricide Orestes. Two Greek strangers are brought as captives to the shrine. *Iphigeneia* questions them and learns that her father Agamemnon has been murdered by Clytemnestra, that she in turn has been slain by her son, and that Orestes still lives. The slaughter of Greek captives is repugnant to her feelings, but one at

least must die ; the other shall be the bearer of a letter from her to the brother whom she supposes to be still in Greece. A generous contention for death between Pylades and Orestes closes with the submission of Pylades to accept the gift of life, for wedded to Electra, the sister of his friend, he may thus continue to future generations the race of Agamemnon. With Iphigeneia's disclosure of the contents of her letter the recognition takes place between brother and sister. She at once falls in with the plot of Orestes and his friend to deceive the Barbarian and carry off the image. To Thoas, the king, she declares that the image has been polluted by the strangers—themselves polluted by the guilt of murdered kin—and that it is her duty to cleanse it in the sprayings of the sea. Thus she and her confederates with the statue of Diana reach their galley, and the oars are plied. But the lord of sea, Poseidon, hurls the vessel back upon the coast. And doom and death would have fallen upon the fugitives, were it not that the Goddess Athena suddenly appears and commands the king to grant them free departure and good speed.

With Goethe the victory is not that of fraud ; it is the victory of heroic truth. A great venture of faith is made by Iphigeneia ; she lays bare before the king the whole plot ; she risks all—not her own safety alone, but the lives of her brother and his friend ; and risking all, she wins all. In her disclosure the purity and nobility of a soul are revealed, and the revelation of a lofty human spirit lifts the king to a nobler plane of feeling. No god or goddess needs here to descend from the heavens ; all is purely human ; the miracle is part of the order of nature. The drama leaves us with the consoling and fortifying assurance that we may think nobly of humanity.

It has been suggested by Scherer that the idea of the victory of truth was derived by Goethe from the action of Neoptolemus in the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles. If it be so, Goethe has certainly deepened the impression by glorifying the truth through a woman, whose strength and weakness are so intimately connected with her affections. The hint given perhaps by Sophocles was taken up and interpreted by the poet's own experience. For guidance in some of the details of his play, he doubtless looked into the Fables of Hyginus; he may have examined the treatment of the subject by Racine in his sketch of the first act of an *Iphigeneia in Tauris*, and that by La Grange in his *Orestes and Pylades*. But a more essential and vital source than any of these is to be found in Goethe's own life and its spiritual experiences. The *Iphigeneia*, like the *Tasso*, is in truth bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

Goethe was no Orestes; in energy of mind, in resilience of temper, in ever-springing resource, he had something in common with his Pylades. But during his early residence in Weimar, Goethe's spirit was full of agitations; his mind was perturbed; he could not always see his way through the confusion of the present day and hour; pangs of memory from the recent past—the past of Sessenheim and of Frankfurt—shot across his brain and penetrated his heart. He had known moments which, when their meaning was evolved by the imagination, made it possible for him to conceive the trouble of Orestes pursued by the Furies. That such was the case he himself recognised. He wrote, in a letter despatched on his birthday in the year 1775, shortly before his departure to Weimar: 'Perhaps the invisible scourge of the Eumenides will before long lash me again out of my fatherland.' In

verses written later at Weimar, he describes the state of that man who finds 'no calm nor rest in all the world,' for whom 'at home and abroad his heart grows a great and heavy burden.' Through such an eyelet-hole of personal experience the poet could discover the pangs and tremors of his distracted Orestes.

But in Weimar there was a presiding presence, a consoler, a comforter, a purifier, an illuminator, a pharos and a haven—so Goethe certainly regarded her—in Charlotte von Stein. By the authority which she exercised over his spirit she seemed to him, among the illusions and shadows of his life, to be the most real and the highest thing that he had known. A sense, different from anything that he had hitherto felt, of the influence for good which one human soul may exert over another came to him. What—as he believed—Charlotte von Stein had wrought for him, the Iphigeneia of his drama could accomplish for and in his Orestes. The classical fable became a symbol of his own experience. He tried to think of Charlotte as a sister of his spirit in some ante-natal sphere. Each word of Shelley in the verse of his *Epipsychidion* could be paralleled from the prose of Goethe's letters:—

'Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the Fate
Whose course has been so starless! Oh, too late,
Belovèd! Oh, too soon adored by me!
For in the fields of Immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine.

But the plastic power of Goethe's imagination was greater than that of Shelley, and his vision should be detached from Weimar, should be idealised in ancient Tauris, and should

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be given something of the pure definition and marmoreal dignity of Greek sculpture. And yet his *Iphigeneia*, with all the authority of noble womanhood, is not wrought in marble. She has the weakness as well as the strength of her sex; she is a creature of flesh and blood; barely winning through her noble venture of faith, and through the sense that her feet are established upon the divine foundations, a victory over the infirmities of her womanhood. When Goethe sent to Weimar from Italy his final recension of the drama, he wrote to Charlotte von Stein: 'To-day *Iphigeneia* is also despatched; O that you may feel how many thoughts have gone to you, hither and thither, till the piece stood as now it stands.' And thus the Greek drama becomes also a part of the great confession which his works constitute.

How is the healing of Orestes effected by *Iphigeneia*? By what means is he delivered from the pursuit of the Furies? The oracle of Apollo had spoken—

‘When to Greece thou bring'st the Sister,
Her who against her will in Tauris bides
Within the sanctuary, the Curse will cease.’

The insight of Orestes did not suffice to save him from a false interpretation of the divine word, one which seemed indeed full of piety—Apollo was the brother of Diana, and it should be his duty to bear back to Greece the Tauric image of Apollo's sister—which seemed full of piety, yet was in fact, when compared with the true meaning, somewhat material, gross, and superstitious. For in reality the sister was *Iphigeneia*, and the image of Diana was in her soul. Here was a discovery of the higher religion of humanity, and the Divine

Presence in the spirit of man. Five years before his death Goethe presented to the actor Krüger a copy of his *Iphigeneia*, with an inscription which closes with words that tell the central idea of his drama—

‘For all human faults (*Gebrechen*)
Pure humanity atones.’

And in his sister Orestes has found this ‘reine Menschlichkeit.’ He had supposed that his whole race had been branded with the Curse of the house of Tantalus. But here in Iphigeneia is one who has no taint of injury or ill, one whom Diana herself has borne in her arms, and elected to be her Priestess. His incredulity fights desperately against the consoling and reassuring truth; he sinks exhausted by the struggle. And then in a vision he beholds his ancestors no longer plotting the murder of kinsfolk, but united around the great progenitor; Thyestes linked with Atreus in familiar converse, Clytemnestra led by the hand of Agamemnon. The vision at its close is touched with trouble, but it means that the uplifting presence of Iphigeneia has not been without its influence, and that Orestes is reascending from darkness to light.

The religious purpose of Iphigeneia, however, extends beyond her brother. It was her hope that some day, ‘with pure hands, pure heart,’ she might do away the curse of her whole house, the heirloom handed down to her race ever since that mysterious sin of Tantalus, which Goethe nowhere clearly sets forth, but which was a human transgression, and therefore might be atoned for by human means. The Priestess in Tauris is not only severed from the companionship of those she loves best, but is also unable to bring them the help she

needs, and therefore her exile is hard to bear, and she pines even in the service of the Goddess who has saved her. As Goethe drove to Bologna in the autumn of 1786, his brain was busy devising the plan of an *Iphigeneia in Delphi*, in which Electra would have had a part. In the fifth act a recognition would have taken place, 'over which,' wrote Goethe, 'I have wept like a child.' It was beauty rather than pathos which could bring tears to Goethe's eyes. But the *Iphigeneia in Delphi* never took form as a work of art in verse or in prose.

To ask whether the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* is classical or modern, seems a somewhat idle question. It is what it is, a masterpiece of a great poet—'of an age,' assuredly, but also 'for all time.' If an answer must be given to the question, it cannot be expressed more precisely than in the words of M. Paul Stapfer: 'The truth is that Goethe's drama is Greek by certain qualities of form: the economy of means, the small number of the personages, the simple greatness of the *ordonnance*, its nobility, gravity, measure, in fine by the superficial and plastic calm, which, being with the Greeks a law of scenic art, might veil in their tragedies a tempest of unrestrained and furious passions, but which in the German *Iphigeneia* is only the harmonious manifestation of the inward calm. . . . As regards the substance of the drama, Goethe's work is modern, not half-modern but entirely so, and this is the chief secret of its singular excellence. . . . The drama of the modern poet is not a cold imitation of the antique, but rather is its living continuation. It is an *Iphigeneia* such as a tragic author of ancient Greece might conceive and write to-day, if he had the advantage of twenty-two centuries, during which the human conscience has grown finer and richer. . . This is the true way

of being Greek. Modern poetry, superior to the ancient by its wealth of sentiments and ideas, has nothing it needs to borrow except the purity of the lines and the nobility of the forms.'

Nothing in the drama is more beautiful than its close. The action, unlike that of the play of Euripides, where it is external and that of an adventure, proceeds wholly from character. Iphigeneia has laid bare her soul, with all its secrets, to the King, not only because truth is the unconquerable need of her nature, not only because she must save the image of the Gods in her own soul, but also because, when she considers human claims, there is for her neither Greek nor Barbarian, and in Thoas she has found the kindness and the honour of a man. She can no more wrong her soul by ingratitude than by falsehood. The parting between her and the man who had shown himself faithful and kind must be as the parting from a father and a friend. On her side this is natural and inevitable; for Thoas it is difficult. Has he not been wounded, as it were, in the house of a friend? A grudging 'Then go!' from him is not enough; it must be a frank 'Farewell!' with a blessing in the grasp of hand. And to such magnanimity as this Thoas is upraised by the daughter-like pleadings of Iphigeneia. All dissonances have been reconciled; all dear blessings have been won. The terrible song of the Parcæ, remembered by Iphigeneia in a moment when the fear of possible disloyalty to the Divine Powers had clouded her confidence of soul, is now unheard even in an echo. Our feeling when the figures pass from view and the curtain falls, is that of Ferdinand at the masque given by Prospero's spirits—

'This is a most majestic vision, and
Harmonious charmingly.'

The earliest English translation of Goethe's *Iphigeneia*, I learn from Dr. Eugene Oswald's Bibliography, published for the English Goethe Society, was that of William Taylor of Norwich. It appeared in 1793, and was reprinted in 1830 in the third volume of Taylor's *Survey of German Literature*. A translation, also in verse, by Dr. G. L. Hartwig, was issued at Berlin, Paris, and London, in 1841. Neither of these versions is of high merit. That by Miss Anna Swanwick (1843) is well known, and deserves the warm commendations which it has received. I am not acquainted with three of the translations recorded by Dr. Oswald, that by G. J. Adler (New York, 1850), that by an anonymous writer, 'privately printed' in 1851, and that by Phyllis Marion Ellis, 'printed for private circulation' in 1883.

The present translation was begun last summer, at Capel Curig, North Wales. It is not for me to speak of what is wholly the work of my wife. The translator has accepted conditions somewhat more severe than those accepted by Miss Swanwick. An attempt is made in every instance to represent the metres of Goethe which vary from his regular blank verse by something aiming at a corresponding effect in English. Where single lines of the German are irregular, these are also irregular in the translation. This, however, is a detail of secondary importance. The impression made by the poem as a whole, together with its fidelity in sense and spirit to the original, is the essential test of merit.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

IPHIGENEIA IN TAURIS

ARGUMENT

IPHIGENEIA, daughter of Agamemnon, supposed to have died as a victim to propitiate Diana, who had been offended by the leader of the Greeks at Aulis, was saved by the Goddess, and borne in a cloud to Tauris, over which King Thoas ruled. There she served as Priestess of Diana, and at her persuasion the bloody rites, by which strangers landing on the coast were offered in sacrifice to the Goddess, fell into disuse. Her brother Orestes, having avenged the death of Agamemnon—whom Agamemnon's wife, Clytemnestra, and her paramour Ægisthus had betrayed and murdered—by the slaying of Clytemnestra, was pursued by the Furies, and became inheritor of the curse of the race of Tantalus. But the Oracle of Apollo declared to him that if he should bring to Greece the sister, who unwillingly abode in Tauris, the Furies should cease to afflict him. This Orestes took to mean that he should bear away from Tauris the image of Apollo's sister, Diana. The play tells how Orestes, with his friend Pylades, who have landed on the Tauric strand, are brought to the shrine as captives, how the brother and sister are made known one to another, how Orestes is delivered from the Furies, how the Oracle is interpreted aright, and how by the grace of King Thoas the two Greek young men, and Iphigeneia, sister to Orestes, are permitted to depart to their own country.

E. D.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

IPHIGENEIA

THOAS, King of the Tauri

ORESTES

PYLADES

ARKAS

SCENE : Grove before DIANA'S Temple

IPHIGENEIA IN TAURIS

ACT I

SCENE I

Iphigeneia

Iph. Under your shadow, O ye restless tree-tops
Of the old sacred heavy-foliaged grove,
Here while I tread, no less than while within
The Goddess' silent sanctuary, I feel
A shudder, as when first I trod this ground ;
No use and wont, as yet, may ease my spirit ;
What though, through many a year, a higher Will
Whereto I yield myself, hath kept me here
Conceal'd, I am an alien now as ever !
For, ah, from all I love the sea doth part me ! 10
Through long long days I stand upon the shore,
With my soul yearning toward the Grecians' land ;
And, for an answer to my sighs, there comes
Only the dull sound of the ceaseless waves !
Alas for him who far from home and kindred
Leadeth a lonely life ! His grief consumes

Each nearest pleasure e'er his lips it toucheth ;
While evermore his thoughts speed swarming forth
Afar unto his Father's halls, where first
The Sun unclosed the heavens to him, and where 20
Brothers and sisters in their childhood's play
Wove gentle cords that tied their hearts together.
I question not the Gods' decrees, but yet
Good cause for murmuring hath womanhood :
The man holds rule in war and in the household,
And shifteth for himself in foreign lands ;
Him wealth rejoiceth, and him victory crowneth ;
And at the end an honoured death awaits him.
Her lot, a wife's, how bound is it and straiten'd !
For duty or for comfort she hath nought 30
But service to a husband's rough commands ;
More misery still, if driven by fate afar.
Me Thoas holdeth here, a generous man,
Fast in these chains of sacred slavery.
Oh, with what shame avow I that my heart
Serves thee, O Goddess, with a hush'd reluctance,
Thee, my Deliveress ! my very life
Freely devoted, were thy meet oblation !
And yet, unceasingly my hope hath been
In thee, Diana, and my hope is still 40
In thee, who to the great King's outcast daughter
Gavest shelter in thy holy gentle arm.
Daughter of Zeus ! if thou that mighty man
Whom thou afflictedst, claiming then his daughter,

If godlike Agamemnon, who had brought
 Gift to thine altar of his best and dearest,
 Thou hast led back, with honour and renown
 From Troy's walls overthrown, to our own land,
 Safely preserving for him wife and son,
 And his Electra, treasures fair and precious, 50
 Me too, at last, give back unto mine own.
 And save me, me whom thou from death didst
 save,
 From my life here, which is but second death.

SCENE II

Iphigeneia, Arkas.

Ark. The King hath sent me hither, and I bear
 His greetings to the Priestess of Diana.
 This is the day when Tauris to her Goddess
 Gives thanks for new and wondrous victory.
 As herald of the King and of his hosts,
 Tidings I bring : he comes ! and they draw near.
Iph. We are prepared to greet them with due honour :
 Our Goddess welcomes with her favouring eyes
 The offering brought to her by Thoas' hands.
Ark. Ah, if within her own eyes I could find— 10
 The Priestess, much revered and noble—find,
 O holy maiden, in thine eyes a look
 Clearer, serener, that were to us all
 A blessed omen ! but some hidden grief

Hath cover'd o'er from us thine innermost.
And vainly have we waited through long years
To catch some word straight-utter'd from thy heart ;
For all the while, since I have known thee here,
Thou hast this look at which I ever shudder ;
And hidden from our ken is barr'd thy soul 20
Deep in thy bosom as with iron bands.

Iph. As best befits an orphan'd, exiled one.

Ark. And dost thou feel as orphan, exile, here ?

Iph. Can a strange land be fatherland to us ?

Ark. But strange to thee thy fatherland hath grown.

Iph. Yea, this is why my heart's wound will not heal !

In early youth, when scarce as yet my soul
Was bound to father, mother, brother, sister,
While the sweet burgeons, nestled close together,
Were sprouting upwards from the parent stem, 30
Pushing their growth towards heaven, alas, 'twas
then

The curse of others seized me ! Me it parted
From all my dear ones, with an iron hand
Wrenching asunder our sweet links of love ;
And it was gone for ever—my glad youth,
The early bloom and growth. I, saved from death,
Am only mine own shadow now ; and ne'er
May life's joys blossom forth again for me !

Ark. If thou thus seek'st to call thyself unhappy,
Ungrateful then may I well call thee, too. 40

Iph. My thanks ye always have.

Iphigeneia in Tauris

ACT I. SC. 2.

Ark.

But not pure thanks,

The thanks a benefactor hopes to win !
The gladsome look that showeth to the giver
A life contented and a loving heart.
Long years ago, when a deep hidden fate
Brought thee unto this temple, then did Thoas
Give thee a welcome tender, reverent ;
Thou in his eyes wert as a gift from God ;
And unto thee our coasts were fair and friendly,
That full of horror were to strangers erst ; 50
For none before thee in this realm had landed
Who fell not, victims by old usage slain,
Upon Diana's holy altar-steps.

Iph. Freely to breathe is not the whole of life !
What life is this, that in the holy abode,
As ghost that haunteth ever his own grave,
I can but mourn away and waste ? Do we
Taste of the joys of conscious living aught,
We, whom each day of vain and listless dreaming
Doth but prepare for the gray days to come 60
On Lethe's shore, where, their own selves forgetting,
The gloomy crowds of dead keep holiday ?
An unused life is an untimely death !
Mine eminently is this lot of woman.

Ark. That noble pride, with self thus discontented,
In thee I pardon, pitying thee withal ;
It robs thee of enjoyment of thy life.
And hast thou, since thou camest, nothing done ?

Who was it, then, that cheer'd the King's dark moods?

Who is it that with gentle suasive power 70

Hath kept annull'd from year to year the law

Of ancient cruelty, that on Dian's altar

Shed every stranger's blood in sacrifice?

The captives saved by thee from certain death

Hast thou not oft restored to their own land?

What though her altar lacks its toll of blood,

Diana is not wroth; thy gentle prayer

Hath she not granted thee in richest measure?

Have not the joyous wings of victory

Swept round our hosts and ever borne them onward?

Hath not the lot of each of us been better'd 81

Since he, our King, who for so long had ruled

Bravely and wisely, now hath in thy presence

Learn'd to delight in ways of gentleness,

And hath our yoke of dumb obedience eased?

Useless thou call'st it! when from thy mere being

A balsam droppeth, like the rain, on thousands;

When for this people, to whom God hath given

thee,

Thou hast been well-spring of pure happiness,

And on the inhospitable shore of death 90

Succour'd the stranger, speeding him in safety.

Iph. The little done must vanish from his eye

Who, looking forward, sees the much undone.

Ark. Him wouldst thou praise who values not his work?

Iphigeneia in Tauris

ACT I. SC. 2.

Iph. Him would we blame who metes and weighs his doings.

Ark. Pride, underrating some true worth in self,
We blame, as vanity o'errating spurious !
Trust me, and lend an ear to honest words
Spoke by a man who serves thee faithfully—
If on this day the King would talk with thee, 100
Help him to utter what is in his mind.

Iph. Thou painest me with these kind words of thine ;
I have avoided many a time his offers.

Ark. In what thou dost have care of thine own good ;
Few friends the King hath trusted, since the day
When death bereaved him of his son, and these
He trusts not now with the old confidence.
Ill-pleased he sees in every noble's son
One who may be successor to his throne ;
He dreads the helplessness of lone old age, 110
Fears possible rebellion and swift death.
The Scythian hath no turn for eloquence,
And least of all the King ; accustom'd only
To act and give command, he is unversed
In subtle ways of leading up a parley
With delicate advances to his point.
So do not thou, by mien of coy reluctance
Or tardy comprehension, hinder him ;
Rather go kindly thou halfway to meet him.

Iph. Then should I speed the thing that threatens me ?

Ark. And wouldst thou call the royal suit a threat ? 121

Iph. To me most terrible of threats it seemeth.

Ark. But give him for his love, at least, thy trust.

Iph. Ay, if he first would rid my soul of fear.

Ark. Why hast thou hid thy parentage from him?

Iph. Secrecy ever doth become a Priestess.

Ark. But there should be no secrets from the King.

And though he presseth no demands, he feeleth,

Ay, feeleth ever in his great soul's depths,

That thou art sedulously shunning him. 130

Iph. And doth he therefore nourish hatred of me?

Ark. So might it almost seem. He keepeth silence,
Yet words have dropp'd from him, by which I learn

That he holds fast within his heart desire

To win thee for his own. Oh, leave him not

Abandon'd longer to his loneliness,

Lest gloomy moods, within his bosom ripening

To some great horror, bring thee cause to rue

That thou my faithful rede hast hark'd too late!

Iph. What, doth the King's mind entertain a purpose
Unthinkable by honourable man, 141

Who loves his own good name, and reverences

Heaven's law in self-restraint? Hath he intent

To force me from the altar to his bed?

I call the Gods to witness—most of all

Appeal I unto Her, the resolute Goddess!

Diana will not fail to guard her Priestess;

Gladly the Maiden will a maiden save!

Ark. Calm thyself! for no stress of heyday blood 149

Drives the King now with youth's impetuousness
Toward such rash deed ! Within his mind another
And sterner purpose worketh now, I fear,
Which irresistibly he will accomplish.
For strong his will is and inflexible ;
Therefore, I beg thee, trust him and be grateful,
Even if thou canst grant him nothing more.

Iph. Oh, say what further is there that thou knowest ?

Ark. Ask of himself : I see the King approaching :
Thou honour'st him, and, taught by thine own
heart,

Wilt meet him trustfully, with friendly cheer : 160

A good word from a woman oft can lead

A noble man far onward.

[*Exit.*

Iph. (*alone*). Though I see not
How I should follow out this faithful counsel,
One charge, at least, most willingly I follow—
To give the King for all his benefits
Good, grateful words—and oh, that I may speak
With truth things pleasing to the mighty man !

SCENE III

Iphigeneia, Thoas.

Iph. With regal blessings may the Goddess bless thee !
And give thee victory, renown, and riches,
The welfare of thy people, and fulfilment

Of thine own best desires ; and mayest thou,
Raised o'er the many by thy care for them,
Be raised o'er many too by choicer joys !

Tho. Enough for me to have my people's praise ;
Fruits of my conquests kept I not myself ;
Others enjoy'd them. Happiest is he,
Be he a King, or be he lowliest subject, 10
Who findeth his best welfare in his household.
Thou hast borne share with me in my deep sorrow,
When he, the last, the best, of all my sons,
Was torn from me by foeman's deadly sword :
And while the thirst for vengeance fill'd my soul
Unfelt was yet the barren emptiness
Of mine own hearth ; but now, return'd in peace,
My son avenged by wreck of hostile realm,
Nought in my home remains that can delight me.
The gladsome loyalty that shone of old 20
Upon me from all eyes is damp'd and dull'd
By a disquietude, for each man ponders
On things that will befall in time to come,
And serves the childless King because he must.
Now come I to this temple, whither oft
I came ere now to pray for victory,
And for my victory to thank ; I bring
An old wish in my heart, and one not strange
To thee, nor unexpected ; let me hope,
For blessing of my people, and my blessing, 30
Thee as my bride within my home to lead !

Iph. To one unknown too much thou offerest,
O King! Before thee now she stands ashamed,
The fugitive who sought upon thy shores
Nought but the shelter and repose thou gavest.

Tho. To keep the secret of thy coming hither
Always thus veil'd from me as from the meanest
Would nowhere be accounted right or good.
To strangers do we make our coasts a terror ;
Law and necessity compel : from thee, 40
Surely, whom we have welcomed as our guest,
Giving thee every pious right, and freedom
To do thy will and pleasure all thy days,
From thee I well might look for confidence
Such as a faithful host doth hope to win.

Iph. If I have kept conceal'd from thee, O King,
My parents' name, my ancestry, it was
Through sore perplexity, through no distrust ;
For haply hadst thou known who stands before thee,
To what damn'd head thou gavest food and shelter,
Grim horror would have seized thy mighty heart ;
Instead of bidding me to share thy throne, 52
Forth from thy realm thou wouldst have driven me
Before the time ordain'd, when glad return
To mine own people should my wanderings end ;
Thou mightst have flung me off to misery
Such as awaiteth outcast vagabonds—
Everywhere cold repulse at hands of strangers.

Tho. Whate'er may be the counsel of the Gods

Concerning thee, thy kindred and thyself, 60
Certain it is that since thou camest hither,
Dwelling among us as our pious guest,
No lack have I of blessing from above ;
Not easy matter were it to convince me
'Twas guilty head I shelter'd, sheltering thine !

Iph. Thine own good deed, and not thy guest, brings
blessing !

Tho. Befriending malefactors is unblest !
Give me no more of silence and delaying ;
No lawless man is he who asks thee this.
It was the Goddess placed thee in my hands, 70
Sacred as unto Her thou wert to me,
And Her least sign is law to me in future.
If of returning home thou canst have hope,
From all demands of mine I set thee free :
But should the way be barr'd to thee for ever,
If scatter'd far in exile are thy kindred,
Or by some huge disaster all extinct,
Then by more laws than one I claim thee mine !
Speak openly ! I keep my word, thou knowest !

Iph. Slow is my tongue to loose itself from bonds 80
That held it for so long—to make disclosure
Of the old secret now at last ; because,
Once utter'd, 'twill have pass'd beyond recall
From out its stronghold in the spirit's depths,
Whether for good or ill the high Gods know !
Learn—of the Race of Tantalus am I.

Tho. Calmly thou utterest a mighty word !

Dost thou call him forefather, whom the world
Knoweth for one who sometime by the Gods
Was highly favour'd ? Is he the Tantalus 90
Brought by great Zeus to counsel and to board,
In whose discoursings, full of old experience,
And many-minded in significance,
Oracular, the Gods themselves took pleasure ?

Iph. It is the same ! but it behoves not Gods
To walk and talk with men as with their equals !
Since far too weakly is the mortal race
To keep undizzied brain on heights unwonted :
Dishonourable was he not, nor traitor !
Too high for henchman's service, as companion
To the great Thunderer mere man was he ! 101
And as for his transgression, it was human !
Stern was their sentence, and the poets sing
How pride and perfidy, from Jove's high table,
To shame in ancient Tartarus cast him down.
Ah, and their hatred all his race have borne !

Tho. Bore they the guilt ancestral, or their own ?

Iph. Truly as heirloom from the mighty Titans
Came down to son and grandson their great breast,
Their pith and marrow ; but around each brow 110
A brazen band, forged by the God, was set ;
And from their wild and sullen eyes he hid
Counsel and wisdom, temperance and patience ;
And all desires within them grew to madness ;

And urgency of their madness brook'd no bounds.
Then Pelops, forceful, violent of will,
The best beloved son of Tantalus,
By treachery and murder gain'd fair wife,
Hippodamia, daughter of CEnomaus ;
And she unto her husband bare two sons, 120
Thyestes, Atreus ; and they twain beheld
With envy the great love their father bore
His first-born son, of earlier bed begotten ;
Fierce hatred made them one for secret venture
On that first crime of theirs, a brother's death ;
And then the father deem'd Hippodamia
Were murderess, and, in his wrath, required
His son from her ; and thereupon—she slew
Herself.

Tho. Why pausest thou ? go on ! say all,
Repent not now thy confidence ! O speak ! 130
Iph. Ah, well for him who findeth in recalling
The deeds of his forefathers and their greatness
A theme whereon he gladly holds discourse,
Viewing himself, with quiet exultation,
As link that closes up the goodly chain !
There is no house that suddenly produces
Monster or demigod ; but from succession
Of evil men or good there issues forth
Some birth of horror, or some great world's joy.
Now when their father died, they held in common—
Atreus, Thyestes—sway o'er all the realm. 141

But not for long such union might endure :
Within a little while Thyestes brought
His brother's bed to shame : then Atreus drave him
In vengeance from the realm ; meanwhile with
cunning,

Thyestes, pondering momentous deeds,
Had stolen his brother's son, and secretly
As his own offspring fosters him ; inspiring
His breast with vengeful thirst, he sendeth him
Forth to the royal city, so that he 150

In one he uncle deems may slay his father.

Quickly discover'd is the stripling's purpose ;

The monarch metes requital pitiless

To him thus sent for murder, for he deems

He does to death his brother's son. Too late

He learneth who it is that tortured dieth

Before his frenzied eyes ! And thereupon

To rid his heart of hunger for revenge,

A deed unheard of silently he plans.

He seemeth calm, indifferent, appeased ; 160

He lures his brother to the realm again,

And with him his two sons. The boys he seizes,

Slaughters, and sets as loathly, gruesome fare

Upon their father's board, at his first meal.

And when Thyestes his own flesh hath eaten

And is well fill'd, a sadness falls on him :

He sends to fetch his children, thinks already

He hears their steps, their voices nigh the doors

Of the great hall ; when lo ! a grinning Atreus
Flings him the heads and feet, his slaughter'd
children's ! 170

King ! thou dost turn thine eyes away in horror !
So did the sun avert his face, yea, turn
His chariot from its everlasting course !
These be the ancestors of me, thy Priestess !
And there is many another unblest hap,
And many deeds of men with minds distraught
Which the night covereth with heavy wings,
Letting us only see in twilight horror !

Tho. And cover them with silence thou ! Enough
Of horrors ! Tell me now, what miracle 180
From such wild lineage hath given thee birth ?

Iph. Of Atreus, first-born son was Agamemnon :
He is my father. I may truly say
That from my earliest years in him I saw
The very pattern of the perfect man.
First fruit of love, me Clytemnestra bore
To him, and then Electra ; and in peace
The King held rule ; and long-unwonted rest
Was granted to the house of Tantalus.
But to the parents' happiness was lacking 190
A son, and scarce was this their wish fulfill'd
In him, Orestes, growing as their darling
Between the sisters twain, when came fresh ill,
Destined to shake the house that seem'd secure.
Doubtless, report hath reach'd thee of the war

Waged to avenge the fairest woman's rape,
That kept the whole might of the Grecian princes
In leaguer round Troy's walls, and whether they
By capture of the city ever reach'd 199
Their goal of vengeance—this I have not learn'd.
My father led the Grecian hosts ; in Aulis
Long waited they for favouring winds in vain ;
Diana, anger'd with their mighty leader,
Held back their speed, and through the mouth of
Calchas

Claim'd as her tribute the King's eldest daughter :
They lured me with my mother to the camp,
They haled me to the altar, and devoted
My head unto the Goddess. She, appeased,
Desired no more my blood : she rescued me,
Folding me in a cloud, and in this temple 210
I found myself—when I awoke from death !
This same am I ! am she, Iphigeneia,
Grandchild to Atreus, Agamemnon's daughter,
Dian's possession, I who speak with thee.

Tho. To the King's daughter I can only give,
As to the unknown maid, my choice, my trust ;
And these again I proffer as at first :
Come, follow me and share all things I have.

Iph. How should I venture such a step, O King ?
Hath not the Goddess, who hath rescued me, 220
Alone the right to my devoted life ?
Herself she chose my place of refuge here,

And she preserves me for my father, whom
Enough she punish'd through the event that seem'd,
Haply for fairest joy of his old age.
Haply my time for glad return is near ;
And what if I, unmindful of her way,
Should fetter myself here against her will ?
I ask'd a sign, if here I ought to bide.

Tho. And the sign is that still thou bidest here : 230
Vex not thyself with seeking such evasions !
In a refusal lavish speech is wasted,
The other side hears nothing but the 'No.'

Iph. These are no words meant to delude the sense ;
It was my deepest heart that I unveil'd :
Hast thou not spoken with me of the longing
That anguisheth my soul, to see my father,
My mother, sister, brother, once again ?
Oh, that in those old halls, where often still
My name they utter in funereal whisper, 240
Joy, such as greets a new-born child, from pillar
To pillar might entwine the festal wreaths !
Oh, wouldst thou on thy ships but send me thither,
New life thou wouldst bestow on me—on all !

Tho. Then go thou back ! and do as thy heart bids :
Hear not the voice of reason, nor good counsel :
Be woman wholly ! give thyself away
To the unbridled impulse that doth seize thee,
And hurry thee off hither or off thither !
If a desire doth burn within their bosom, 250

No holy bond will keep them from the traitor
Who lures them out from tried and faithful arms,
Father's or husband's. If within their breast
The impulsive glow is silent, vainly urges,
With truth and power, persuasion's golden tongue.

Iph. O King, bethink thee of thy noble word !
Dost thou thus meet my confidence ? I thought
Thou wert prepared all things to comprehend !

Tho. For things unlook'd for I was not prepared,
But this I might expect, for knew I not 260
It was a woman I was dealing with ?

Iph. Nay, Monarch, cast no blame on our poor sex !
A woman's weapons cannot vie with yours
In lordly sheen, yet are they not ignoble.
Trust me, herein I have advantage o'er thee,
That better than thyself I know thy good :
Thou dreamest, in thy ignorance of me
And thine own self, that in a nearer bond
Our happiness would lie. With generous courage
Thou pressest this on me to make me yield : 270
And here I thank the Gods that they have given
The firmness to my heart to keep aloof
From this alliance which their will approves not.

Tho. No God now speaketh, only thine own heart.

Iph. 'Tis through our hearts alone they speak with us !

Tho. And have not I the right to hear them too ?

Iph. The still small voice is drown'd amid the storm.

Tho. And audible then only to the Priestess ?

Iph. Chiefly of all men should a Prince attend it.

Tho. Thy holy office, and thy rights inherited 280
From Jove's high table, bring thee nearer Gods
Than a wild earth-born man.

Iph. And thus I pay
Penalty of my trust enforced by thee !

Tho. I am but human ! better let us end it !
And let my word remain. Be Priestess thou
Of the great Goddess who elected thee :
But may Diana pardon me in this
That I unrighteously, and with reproach
Of conscience, her old offerings withheld !
For never, in the times gone by, did stranger 290
Draw nigh our shores except to certain death.
Thou only by thy gentle friendliness,
Which seemed to me at times a daughter's love,
And sometimes a hush'd bridal inclination,
Gladdening my heart, didst fetter me, as if
In magic bonds, oblivious of my duty ;
And all my senses didst thou lull to sleep ;
I did not hear my people's murmurings,
And now they lay at my own door alone
The guilt that wrought my son's untimely death.
No longer, for thy sake, will I hold back 301
The multitude that clamours for a victim.

Iph. Not for mine own sake did I this desire :
He reads amiss the Heavenly Beings' mind
Who deemeth Them athirst for blood ; he maketh

Gods after fashion of his own fierce lusts.
Did not the Goddess save me from the Priest
Herself? She will'd my service, not my death.

Tho. It is not fitting that the hallow'd usage
We should interpret with our shifting reason, 310
And turn to consonance with our own will.
Do thou the duty that is thine—I mine
Will do. There are two strangers in my hands,
Found by us hiding in the sea-board caves,
And unto this my land no good they bring :
Thy Goddess now may take, in these, her first
And rightful offering, miss'd by her so long :
I send them hither—to what use, thou knowest !

SCENE IV

Iphigeneia, alone.

Iph. Clouds hast thou, O gracious Deliveress !
Thine to enfold the guiltless, the hunted :
And on winds thou canst bear them away,
Saved from the iron grasp of their Fate,
Far o'er the sea, o'er the earth's widest stretches,
Bear them wherever it seemeth thee good.
Wise art thou ! Thou seest the Future ;
Nor is the Past from thy vision departed.
Resteth ever thine eye on thy people,

E'en as thy light, the life of the night-time, 10
Resteth on earth, and over it ruleth.
Keep my hands unstained with bloodshed ;
Ne'er it bringeth or blessing or peace ;
Yea, will the form of one slain by mischance
Haunt with a horror, in hours of his ailing,
Him who the murder unwillingly wrought.
They, the Immortals, behold with their love,
Spread o'er the earth, the fair races of men :
Fain would they give to each mortal a respite,
Life that is fleeting delaying for him. 20
Heaven, all their own, everlasting, they gladly
Share with us, blending their joyance with ours ;
Granting its show to our eyes for a while.

ACT II

SCENE I

Orestes, Pylades.

Ores. This is the way to death that now we tread :
With every step my soul grows quieter.
What time I pray'd Apollo for release
From my grim escort of avenging ghosts,
His words divine, and rich in hope's assurance,
Seem'd promise of some succour and salvation
Within his well-beloved sister's fane,
She who o'er Tauris rules ; and now hath it
Fulfilment met, that here should all my woe
An ending find—and with it—mine own life. 10
How easy doth it grow for me, in whom
The heart hath been constringed, the senses dull'd
By the God's hand, the sunlight to resign !
And if no end by victory crown'd be won
By Atreus' grandson in the battlefield,
If I, even as my forefathers and father,
Find piteous death like beast for sacrifice,

So be it ! Better here before the altar,
Than in some hidden corner, snared i' the net
Spread by assassins' hands, my next of kin. 20
Spare me, O ye of the dread nether world,
Until the time ! Ye who, like hounds let loose,
Harry me, scenting blood that from my feet
Trickles, betraying by what path I came,
Spare me ! for soon I shall descend to you,
Where daylight shall not shine on you nor me !
This fair green carpet of the upper earth
Should be no field for hideous spectres' sports :
Down underneath it I will seek you ! There
Equals are all in dull unending night. 30
My Pylades ! thou who hast been to me
The guiltless comrade of my guilt and ban,
I am distress'd for thee, because I take thee
Too soon with me into that mournful land ;
In thee is centred, in thy life or death,
All that remains to me of hope or fear.

PyL. Not yet am I prepared, like thee, Orestes,
For a descent into the shadowy realm :
I still bethink me, how, through all this tangle
Of paths that seem to lead to blackest night, 40
We may upwind our way to life again.
Not death I contemplate ; I scheme and listen
If peradventure for some joyful flight
For us the Gods may ways and means provide.
(Albeit when cometh Death, it is resistless

Whether by fears or fearlessness of ours !)
Even when the Priestess lifts her hands to shear
Our locks, devoting us, my single thought
Shall be deliverance for thee and me.
Uplift thyself from this despondency ! 50
Thy doubting heart doth only speed the danger.
This word Apollo gave us—‘Thou shalt find,
Prepared within my sister’s sanctuary
Comfort and succour, and a glad return’ :
The words of Gods are not equivocal,
As one with soul cast down imagines sadly.

Ores. Early around my tender head my mother
Spread the dark veil of life : I, growing up,
Was very semblance of my father ; wherefore
Seem’d it to her and to her paramour 60
That my eyes cast them bitter dumb reproach.
How oft, when at the great hall’s fire, Electra,
My sister, silently was sitting, I
Would throw myself, oppress’d, into her lap,
And stare at her with my wide-open’d eyes,
To see how bitterly she wept ! She told me
Much of our lofty father. Oh, how sorely
Long’d I to see him and to be with him !
I wish’d myself at Troy, or wish’d him here :
Then came the day—

Pyl. Oh, leave to hellish ghosts 70
Tales of that hour to be their nightly pastime !
For us let memories of fairer days

Renew our strength for some heroic course.
 The Gods have need to use for their own service
 On this wide earth full many a valiant man ;
 On thee they reckon still. They gave thee not
 For escort to thy father when he went
 Down into Orcus, all indignantly.

Ores. Oh, would that I had seized his garment's hem,
 And follow'd him !

Pyl. They who restrain'd thee thus 80
 Did well for me ; I cannot think at all
 Of what my life without thee would have been :
 For I with thee, and for thy sake, have only
 Lived from my childhood—and desire to live.

Ores. Oh, bring not back the memory of those days
 So beautiful, when thy home shelter'd me,
 And wisely, lovingly, thy noble father
 Foster'd the tender blossom, well-nigh starved ;
 When thou, a comrade ever merry-hearted,
 Like airy, many-colour'd, butterfly, 90
 Kept fluttering with new life through every day,
 All around me the dark-hued flower, and thou
 Didst sportively infect me with thy mirth,
 Till I forgot my woe. Thy quick young blood
 Carried me with its revelling along.

Pyl. My life began when I began to love thee !

Ores. Say—'Then began my woe !' So speak'st thou
 truly!

The bitterest anguish is it in my lot,

That, like as one who stricken by the plague
Is banish'd, I where'er I pass bring death 100
Hidden within my breast ; I come where health
Hath reign'd ; and straightway see in faces
round me,

Blooming before, the signs of slow sure death.

Pyl. I should have been the first to die this death
If breath of thine, Orestes, brought such bane ;
And am I not, as ever, strong and merry ?
A merry heart and Love are wings for us
To soar to lofty deeds.

Ores. To lofty deeds ?

Ah, well I mind the time when we such deeds
Before us saw, when we twain ran together 110
Following our game o'er hill and dale, and hoped—
The ancestral heart and muscle being ours—
Likewise to hunt in days to come, with club
And sword, on track of monster or of robber.
And when, at eventide, we sat together,
Close leaning each on each beside the sea,
Its waves' low laughter rippling to our feet,
The world so wide, so open, lay before us :
And often one of us would grasp his sword,
While all the great deeds of our future throng'd 120
Innumerable as stars of night around us.

Pyl. Endless the work towards whose accomplishing
Our spirit presses. We are fain to make
Each deed of ours of magnitude not less

Than that whereto it waxeth rolling on
Through many a land and folk, through mouths of
poets ;

So fine they sound, these doings of our fathers,
When sung, with harp accompaniment, drunk in
By young men resting in the cool of eve :

Our doings are to us as theirs to them— 130
Much toil, and idle patchwork !

Thus run we after things that fly before us ;
We give no thought unto the road whereon
We are stepping now, and scarcely do we see,
Hard by, the footsteps of our ancestors,
The tracks remaining of their earthly life ;
It is their shadow that we hasten after
Ever as, godlike, in a region far,
Some mountain's head on golden clouds it crowneth.
I care not for the man who counts himself 140
The hero future folk may reckon him ;
Yet I would have thee thank the Gods, dear youth,
That they betimes have done so much through
thee.

Ores. Ay ! if they grant a man some glad deed's doing ;
Be it to ward off ill from his own kin,
Be it to extend his realm, secure its borders,
While ancient foes he slays or puts to flight—
Then he may offer thanks ; to him a God
Accordeth joy of life, its first and last.
Me they elected to be slaughterer, 150

To be the murderer of her, my mother,
Whom yet withal I honour'd. Infamously
They avenged a deed of infamy, and me
At their beck to an utter ruin brought.
Believe me, on the house of Tantalus
Spoken is their doom : and I, the last, must
perish
Not guiltlessly—not honourably !

Pyl. The Gods
Avenge not on the son the father's crimes :
Each man, or good or evil, hath his wages
For his own act, and taketh them with him. 160
The parents' blessing, not their curse, is heirloom.

Ores. Methinks their blessing did not lead us hither.

Pyl. At least it was the high Gods' will that led us.

Ores. So then it is their will that doth destroy us ?

Pyl. Do thou what They have bidden thee, and wait !
If thou the sister bringest to Apollo,
And They conjoin'd in Delphi dwell, receiving
A noble-thoughted people's veneration,
Then, forasmuch as thou hast wrought this deed,
The Twain on high will show thee grace, and save
thee 170

Out of the hands of Them below the earth :
Even now none ventures through this hallow'd
grove !

Ores. At least then I shall die a peaceful death.

Pyl. Not so, think I. I, with no unskill'd wits,

Have spread the matter silently before me,
Searching therein to trace some link betwixt
The things we know and things that are to come :
May be, long ripening in the high Gods' counsel
Hath been this great event. Diana yearns
To quit these savage coasts where human blood
Barbarians offer her. For this fair deed 181
Chosen are we ; it hath been laid on us ;
Wondrously to its door are we impell'd.

Ores. Thy wits thus weave the counsels of the Gods,
With wondrous art, in one with thine own wishes.

Pyl. What good are mortal wits except to lurk
Watching the will of Them that be above us ?
A God may call to some grave deed a man,
Noble, though culpable in much, and lay
On him the thing that seems impossible. 190
The hero conquers ; by such service he
Atones to Gods and men and wins their honour.

Ores. And if I be ordain'd to live and do,
Meet were it that some God would take from me
This dizziness that binds my weighted brow,
And hurries me to death along the path
Slippery, bespatter'd with my mother's blood.
Would that his grace might stanch the source that
spurts

From out her wounds, and stains me evermore !

Pyl. Wait, but more calmly ! Thou dost aggravate 200
Thine ill, assuming thus the Furies' office ;

Keep quiet thou—let me devise !—at last
This act of ours will need our strength combined ;
Then will I call on thee ; with cautious boldness
We twain will march together to achievement.

Ores. I hear Ulysses speaking !

Pyl. Do not mock !

For every man his hero must select
In wake of whom he struggles up the path
Which to Olympus climbs. I freely own
That in a man to valiant deeds devoted 210
I see in craft and prudence no disgrace.

Ores. Brave and straightforward is the man I honour.

Pyl. Therefore I wish'd for no advice from thee :
One step already hath been ta'en ; I lured
Much information from our prison guards ;
I know there is some stranger-woman, godlike,
Who keepeth fetter'd this bloodthirsty law,
And bringeth for an offering to the Gods
Incense, and prayer, and purity of heart.
High praise this gracious lady hath ; and she, 220
They say, is sprung from race of Amazons,
And hither come in flight from some great ill.

Ores. It seems that her bright empire lost its force
Then when that criminal drew nigh, on whom
Lieth, like night, the curse that harries him ;
The pious thirst for blood hath loosed the
fettters

From that old usage now for our destruction ;

By the King's savage mood we are done to death ;
No woman from his wrath may rescue us.

Pyl. And lucky are we that it is a woman ; 230
A man, ay, e'en the best, grows soon accustom'd
To cruelties he first abhorr'd, and custom
Grows law to him at last, and he becomes,
Through habit, hard, scarce recognisable.
But as for woman, evermore she bideth
Of one mind, whatsoe'er her mind may be ;
And we may count on her for good or ill.
But hush ! She comes ! Leave her and me alone.
Not all at once I dare our names to tell
Nor unreservedly confide our fortunes. 240
Go then ! and ere she speaks with thee, I'll meet
thee.

SCENE II

Iphigeneia, Pylades.

Iph. Whence art thou, and whence comest thou, O
stranger,

Oh, speak to me ! for surely it doth seem
That thou in aspect art more Greek than Scythian.

[*She takes off his chains.*]

Perilous is the freedom I am giving !
May Gods avert the thing that threatens you !

Pyl. O that sweet voice ! The gladly-welcomed sound
Of mother-tongue here in an alien land !
And hearing I, the captive, see again
With a new welcome, those blue hills around
My people's harbour, as with mine own eyes : 10
Let this my joy assure thee I, too, am Greek.
I had forgotten for one moment now
How sorely I have need of thee, my spirit
Turning towards all the glory of that vision.
Tell me, unless some Fate hath closed thy lips,
What is that race of ours from which thou dost
Reckon descent, so godlike seemest thou ?

Iph. It is the Priestess who now speaks with thee,
She whom the Goddess chose herself and hallow'd :
Let this suffice thee. Tell me who thou art, 20
And by what unblest overruling Fate
Thou and thy comrade have been hither brought.

Pyl. Easy for me to tell thee what dire ill
Molests us with its fell companionship ;
And would that thou as easily couldst grant us,
Thou godlike woman, one glad ray of hope.
We are from Crete, and are Adrastus' sons :
I am the youngest, Cephalus by name,
He, eldest of our house, Laodamas.
There was a third between us, rough and wild, 30
Even in our childish sports he marr'd our pleasure,
Throwing a discord. To our mother we
Yielded obedience well content, while still

Before Troy town our valiant father fought.
But when, enrich'd with booty, he return'd
And shortly after died, there rose a strife
For realm and heritage amongst the brethren.
I sided with the eldest : he his brother
Slew. And now because of his blood-guiltiness
By Furies is he violently driven. 40

And yet Apollo, he of Delphi, sent us
Forth to these savage shores in hopefulness ;
Within the temple of his sister here
He bade us to await some blessed aid.
We were made captive, hither were we brought,
Given o'er to thee for sacrifice. Thou knowest.

Iph. Troy ! hath it fallen ? Dear stranger, is this sure ?

Pyl. Fallen, it lies ! And oh, do thou make sure
Our safety, speed the help a God hath promised !
Ah ! let thy heart take pity on my brother, 50
And give him straightway some kind gracious word.
But when thou speakest with him, spare him ; this
With urgency I entreat, for liable
Is he to swift disordering of his mind
By stress of joy, or pain, or memory :
A fever'd frenzy often falls on him ;
Then wholly is his free and noble soul
Abandon'd to the Furies as their prey.

Iph. However great thy woe, forget it now,
This I conjure thee, till thou satisfiest me. 60

Pyl. The lofty city, which through ten long years

Withstood the whole might of the Grecian host,
Lies now in ruins, nevermore to rise.
Yet many graves of our best warriors
Bid us remember the Barbarians' shores :
Achilles lies there with his gallant comrade.

Iph. O godlike semblances ! and are ye dust ?

Pyl. And Palamedes, Telamonian Ajax,
Daylight in their own land have seen no more.

Iph. He speaks not of my father, names him not 70
Among the slain. He liveth still for me !

Yes ! I shall see him ; oh, hope on, my heart !

Pyl. Yet blessed are the thousands, who have died .
A death, the bitter-sweet, at foemen's hands !
For desolating horror, woful end,
In place of triumph did a hostile God
In wrath prepare for him who home return'd.
Comes there no sound of human speech to you ?
For speech, where'er it reacheth, bears the tale
Of deeds beyond all hearing that were done : 80
And is the lamentation, that with sighs
Fills o'er and o'er again Mycenæ's halls,
Is it a secret from thee ? Clytemnestra,
Help'd by Aegisthus, did her husband snare,
Murder'd him on the day of his return.
I see thou holdest this King's house in honour ;
Yes ! for thy bosom heaves, in vain attempt
To fight these tidings, monstrous, all unlook'd for.
Art thou the daughter of some friend of his ?

Or wert thou born somewhere anigh his city? 90
Hide not this from me. Count it not my fault
That I was first to tell thee of these horrors.

Iph. Say on ! How was the heinous deed accomplish'd ?

Pyl. The day of his arrival, when the King
Had bathed and then, refresh'd, stepp'd out in
peace,

Asking his garment from his consort's hand,
That most pernicious woman threw a web,
Of many folds and cunningly intricate,
Around his shoulders, o'er his noble head :
And while he vainly strove to free himself 100
As from a net, from out its toils, then struck him
Aegisthus, the foul traitor.—Thus enshrouded
The mighty King went down unto the dead.

Iph. And what reward received he, her accomplice ?

Pyl. A kingdom and a bed already his.

Iph. Then it was lust that drove them to this crime ?

Pyl. And a deep feeling of an old revenge.

Iph. Wherein had he, the King, offended her ?

Pyl. By a most grievous deed which, if excuse
Could be for murder, might excuse it well ; 110

Under false pretext led he her to Aulis,
And thither brought, what time the God opposed
By boisterous winds the sailing of the Grecians,
His eldest daughter, Iphigeneia, there
Before Diana's altar, and she fell
A bloody sacrifice to Grecian weal !

And by this deed so deep a hate was stamp'd
Upon her heart that to Aegisthus' wooings
She gave herself, and wrapp'd with her own hands
Her husband in the net to his destruction. 120

Iph. [*veiling herself*]. It is enough ! Hereafter I will
see thee.

Pyl. How deeply moved she seemeth by the fate
Befall'n the royal house ; whoe'er she be
She hath well known the King herself ; perchance
Sold from some noble house was she, and brought
Hither—and for our luck ! Lie still, my heart !
And let us wisely steer with joyful courage,
Led by the star of hope that glimmers towards us.

ACT III

SCENE I

Iphigeneia, Orestes

Iph. Unhappy man ! I loose these bonds from thee
Only as sign of a more cruel fate ;
The liberty the sanctuary doth grant
Is only, as the last bright flash of life
In grievous sickness, messenger of death.
As yet, I cannot, will not reckon you
As wholly lost ; for how could I myself
With murderous hand devote you to your death ?
And no man, whosoe'er he be, may touch
Your head, while I am Priestess of Diana. 10
But if I should refuse to do this duty
According to the wrathful monarch's will,
And he elect, amongst my maidens, one
For my successor, then I have no help
To give you, nought but my own burning wish !
O honour'd fellow-countrymen ! The serf,
The meanest, who had touch'd the household Gods,
Hath welcome from us in an alien land.

How can I e'er receive you with enough
Of joy and blessing, ye who bring before me 20
The semblances of heroes whom my parents
Taught me to honour, ye who my inmost heart
Refresh with the soft touches of new hope?

Ores. Dost thou thy name conceal, thine origin,

With wise intent? or may I dare to ask
Who, like a heavenly Being, meeteth me?

Iph. And thou shalt know me. Tell me further now
What from thy brother I have heard in part,
The end of those, who, coming back from Troy,
Were dumbly met upon their dwelling's threshold
By cruel destiny all unexpected. 31

Though brought unto these shores while still so
young,

Well I remember the shy looks I cast,
Affrighted half, and half in admiration,
Upon those heroes : they went marching forth
As if Olympus' self its doors had open'd,
And sent forth, from the illustrious world of old,
Those stately figures to be Ilion's terror :
And stateliest of all was Agamemnon !

Oh tell me ! He was slain on coming home 40
By wiles of his own wife and of Aegisthus?

Ores. Thou sayest.

Iph. Woe to thee ! Mycenæ miserable !
From Tantalus' grandsons' full wild hands were
sown

Curse upon curse, broadcast. Like noxious weed
That shakes its ugly heads, and thousandfold
Scatters its seeds around itself, begotten
Were murderers of kin, through children's children,
In reciprocity of rage eternal !
Unfold to me what in thy brother's tale
Swift darkness of my horror hid from me. 50
What of the last son of the mighty stem,
The gentle child thus call'd to be one day
Avenger of his father ? Hath Orestes
Pass'd through that day of blood unscath'd ? or hath
A like fate in Avernus' nets enwound him ?
Hath he been saved ? and liveth ? and Electra ?

Ores. They live.

Iph. O golden sun ! thy loveliest beams
Lend me, and lay them, my thank-offering,
Before Jove's throne, for I am poor and dumb !

Ores. If with this royal house thou art united 60
By ties of hospitality, or yet
A nearer bond, as thy fair joy bewrayeth,
Restrain thy heart, and hold it fast—for how
Should one endure from heights so jubilant
The sheer fall back into old pain again ?
Thou only knowest of Agamemnon's death.

Iph. And in this news have I not heard enough ?

Ores. What thou hast heard is only half the horrors.

Iph. What more ? Orestes and Electra live.

Ores. And fearest thou for Clytemnestra nought ? 70

Iph. Nor hope nor fear avails for her salvation.

Ores. Yea, from the land of hope she hath departed.

Iph. Shed she her own blood, madden'd with remorse?

Ores. No ; yet it was her own blood gave her death.

Iph. Speak plainly, so that I may cease this guesswork ;
The dark wings of uncertainty keep beating
In myriad-wise about my troubled brain.

Ores. And so the Gods chose me for messenger
To spread abroad a deed which I would fain
Hide in Night's realm of caverns, dull and dank 80
And soundless all ! It is against my will
Thy gracious mouth compels ; yet well may it
Ask for what costs us pain and have its asking.
Upon the day when their great father fell,
Electra saved her brother, hiding him.
Then Strophius, wedded to their father's sister,
Took him and kindly rear'd him with his son.
That son, named Pylades, with the new comer
Was quickly join'd in fairest friendship's bond ;
And, with their growth to manhood, in their souls
There grew a fierce desire to wreak revenge 91
For the King's death. Disguised and unexpected
They reach'd Mycenæ, feigning that they brought
The mournful tidings of Orestes' death
Together with his ashes. Then the Queen
Receives them courteously ; within the house
They enter ; to Electra doth Orestes
Make himself known ; fann'd by her breath, the fire

Of vengeance blazes up in him—a fire 99
That in his mother's sacred presence smoulder'd ;
Speechless she leads him to the spot where fell
His father, where is still an old, faint trace
Of blood iniquitously shed, that stains
With ominous pale streaks the oft-wash'd floor ;
And every circumstance of that curst deed
She pictures forth as with a tongue of fire,
And her own weary life as wretched bonds slave,
The lucky traitor's overbearing mien,
The dangers they—the brother, sister—dread 109
From the once mother, now to stepdame grown.
She presseth into his grasp the ancient dagger,
The same that rag'd of old in Tantalus' house,
And Clytemnestra fell by her son's hand.

Iph. Immortals ! ye who live through your pure day,
Serene, on the evermore renewing clouds,
Was it for this cause only that ye kept me
Apart from all the world through many a year,
Holding me near Yourselves, and setting me
The childlike task to feed the sacred flame,
Lifting my soul in holy clarity 120
Flame-like continually to Your high dwelling—
Was all this but to deepen now my sense
Of these the abominations of my house ?
Tell me of him thus wretched—of Orestes !
Ores. Would it were possible to say he died !
There rose, outseething from the blood o' the slain,

His mother's ghost !
And call'd aloud to Night's primæval daughters,
' Let not the Matricide escape !
Pursue the criminal ! he is given o'er to you !' 130
They hearken, and from out their hollow eyes
They cast a look around with eagles' greed,
And they bestir themselves in their dark caves,
And their companions, Remorse and Doubt,
Creep from the corners, gliding on with them.
Before them goes a smoke from Acheron :
And through the whirling clouds of it there rolls,
Bewilderingly around the guilty head,
For evermore the thought of what was done ;
And they, with licence for destruction, step 140
Upon the God-sown earth, the beauteous floor,
Whence an old curse erewhile had banish'd them.
Swift are their feet ! They hunt the fugitive !
They give him rest but to renew the terror !

Iph. Unhappy man ! thou, being in like case,
Canst feel what that poor fugitive must suffer.

Ores. What sayst thou ? Why dost thou suppose like
case ?

Iph. Thou hast a brother's murder on thy heart ;
To me thy younger brother this confided.

Ores. I cannot suffer it that thou, great soul, 150
Shouldst by a word of falsehood be deceived ;
Let lying web be woven by a stranger
Rich in devices, and with wont of guile,

To trip a stranger's feet. Between us two
Let there be truth !

I am Orestes, and this guilty head
Inclineth to the grave and seeketh death,
Will welcome death in any form it comes.
Whoe'er thou beest, I wish thee fair salvation,
And for my friend—but not for mine own self. 160
Thou seemest to tarry here against thy will ;
Take counsel for a flight, and leave me here :
And may my lifeless corpse be flung from the rocks !
And may my blood reek down into the sea !
And bring a curse on the Barbarians' shores :
But go ye home to the fair Grecian land,
There to begin in gladness a new life !

[He withdraws to some distance.]

Iph. And thus, Fulfilment, at the last thou comest !
Thou loveliest daughter of the Almighty Father !
Thou comest down to me. Oh, how prodigious 170
Thy semblance is that stands before me now !
My vision scarce can reach those hands of thine
That, fill'd with store of fruits and blessed garlands,
Bring treasures of Olympus down to us.
And as a King is known by lavish measure
Of gifts he giveth—for to him seems little
What hath by thousands been accounted wealth—
So may we recognise you, O ye Gods,
By long-withheld bestowals, wisely order'd.
For Ye alone know what is good for us, 180

Ye look into the future's outspread realm
 Whose spectacle is covered from our eyes
 By every evening's veil of stars and mists ;
 Calmly Ye hear the prayer we bring to you
 In childish importunity for speed :
 No golden fruits of Heaven your hands will pluck
 Unripe, and woe to whoso in impatience
 Dares snatch at them and eat. To him their
 savour

Is bitter unto death ! Oh, let not now
 This long-awaited, scarce-imagined bliss 190
 Pass by me and away, as might the shadow
 Of some dead friend, to leave a threefold pain.

Ores. (returning) Dost thou entreat the Gods for thine
 own self

And Pylades, then couple not my name
 With yours. Thou canst not save the criminal :
 Companioning him thou sharest his curse and woe !

Iph. Bound in one bundle are my fate and thine.

Ores. In no wise. Leave thou me to go my way
 Down to the dead, alone and unescorted ;
 For even if thou wouldst fold the guilty man 200
 In thine own veil, thyself, thou couldst not hide
 him

From the eyes of them, the Ever-wakeful ones.
 Even thy presence, heavenly maid, may only
 Turn them aside, it cannot banish them :
 They have not dared to tread audaciously

With brazen feet upon the hallow'd ground
Within this wood, yet from afar I hear,
On this side and on that, their hideous laughter :
Wolves lie in waiting thus around a tree
Which some wayfaring man hath climb'd for safety.
And there they lie, beleaguering outside, 211
And if I quit this grove, they will start up
With shakings of their serpent-wreathéd heads,
Raising the dust, from everywhere around ;
Then on before them will they drive their prey !

Iph. Orestes, canst thou hear a friendly word ?

Ores. Nay, keep it rather for some friend o' the Gods !

Iph. They give thee what will light thee to new hope.

Ores. Through reek and vapour see I the faint glimmer
Of death's dull river, lighting me to hell. 220

Iph. Say, is Electra then thy one sole sister ?

Ores. The only one I knew. Her kindly fate,
That seem'd to us so cruel, took the elder
Betimes away from misery of our kin.

Oh, leave these questionings ! and do not thou
Join with the Erinyes. A malicious joy
They take in blowing the ashes from my soul ;
They will not suffer that the dying embers
Of the old Brand of Terror of our house
Should silently become extinct in me. 230

Why should the flame for evermore be fed
Assiduously with brimstone out of hell,
To make it burn for torture of my soul ?

Iph. But 'tis sweet incense that I bring to the flame.
Oh, let the burning of thy soul be cool'd
By Love's pure breath that gently blows on it !
Canst thou not understand, Orestes, dearest ?
Or hath companionship of Gods of horror
Dried up the very blood within thy veins ?
Or doth there creep some petrifying spell, 240
As from the Gorgon's head, through all thy limbs ?
Oh, if a voice from a slain mother's blood
Issues with groans that call thee down to hell,
May not a sister's words of benediction
Call from Olympus Gods who are strong to save ?

Ores. A call ! a call ! Dost thou desire my ruin ?
Is an avenging Goddess hidden within thee ?
Who art thou ? for thy voice doth terribly
Shake the foundations of my inmost being.

Iph. What to thy deepest heart it shows is this : 250
Orestes, it is I ! See ! Iphigeneia !
She liveth !

Ores. Thou !

Iph. My brother !

Ores. Off ! away !

I counsel thee to touch no hair of mine !
For, as from Creusa's bridal robe, from me
There issues forth a quenchless fire that catches.
Leave me ! As Hercules, I, unworthy wretch,
Resolve to die my shameful death alone.

Iph. Thou shalt not die ! Oh, if I could but hear

Utter'd by thee one single quiet word !
Oh free me from my doubt, and let the bliss 260
Pray'd for so long be now assured to me !
Within my soul a wheel keeps turning, turning,
With joy and pain alternate ; now a shudder
Maketh me from the stranger shrink—then mightily
My very heart-strings to a brother draw me.

Ores. Is this a temple of Lyæus here ?

Hath lawless-holy frenzy seized the Priestess ?

Iph. Oh hear me ! look on me ! behold my heart
How it doth open out, though closed so long,
Greeting this happiness, to me the dearest 270
That the whole world can give—to kiss thy brow,
To clasp thee in the arms that I so oft
Spread to the empty winds. Oh, let me ! let me !
No clearer doth the ever-welling spring
Rise on Parnassus and go sparkling, leaping
From rock to rock down to the golden vale,
Then doth this joy stream forth from out my heart,
Encompassing me within a sea of blessing !
Orestes ! O my brother !

Ores. Beauteous nymph,

Thee and thy soft caresses trust I not : 280
Austerer handmaidens Diana needs :
She will avenge her desecrated shrine :
So take thine arm from off my breast, and if
Thou hast a mind to love and save some youth,
And make him tender offers of fair bliss,

Go, turn thy fancy to my friend instead ;
He is the better man ; he is wandering now
About the rocky paths ; go ! seek for him,
Make thyself guide to him and let me be !

Iph. Brother, be calm ! I, who was lost, am found !
Know me, thy sister, whose pure heavenly joy 291
May not be chidden as light guilty lust.
Gods, take the illusion from his staring eyes !
Let not our moment of supremest joy
Turn to our threefold misery ! She is here,
That sister lost so long ago. From the altar
The Goddess bore me off and rescued me,
Bringing me here to her own sanctuary :
Thou wert made captive, wert sent here as victim,
And in the Priestess thou hast found thy sister. 300

Ores. O miserable woman ! May the sun
See now the ultimate horror of our race !
Is not Electra here, to go with us
Down to destruction rather than reserve
Her life for fate more cruel, keener pain ?
Priestess, 'tis well ! I 'll follow to the altar :
A good old custom of our ancestral stem
Is fratricide ! Ye Gods, I give you thanks
In that ye have ordain'd me to extinction 309
With never a child ! Now let me counsel thee—
Love not too much the sunshine or the starlight ;
Come down into the dark realm ; follow me !
As dragons, in a sulphur-pool engender'd,

Eat themselves up, in strife their spawn devouring,
So doth this madden'd race destroy itself.
Come with me, down, while childless still and
guiltless !

Thou lookest upon me with thy pity ! Cease !
For with such eyes did Clytemnestra seek
To find some way to reach the heart of her son !
And yet his arm uprais'd struck home to her breast !
I slew my Mother ! Come, thou angry ghost ! 321
And come, ye Furies ! Close our circle round ;
Ye 'll stay to see the welcome spectacle,
The last and gruesomest ye have prepared !
Here nor revenge nor hatred whets the dagger :
A loving sister needs must do the deed ;
Nay, weep not, sister, 'tis no fault of thine ;
For since my years of early childhood nought
Have I e'er loved as I could love thee now !
So be it ! Strike with thy steel, and spare me not !
Rip up my bosom ! Open out a way 331
To let the blood escape that boils in it.

[He sinks exhausted.]

Iph. This happiness and this misery I cannot
Bear all alone— Where art thou, Pylades ?
Where shall I find thee, and thy help, dear friend ?
[She goes out looking for him.]

SCENE II

*Orestes**Ores. (awaking from his stupor and standing up).*

Another draught ! Oh, out of Lethe's waters
Give me the last cool beaker to refresh me !
Soon will life's agony be wash'd away
From out my bosom ; soon in quietness
My spirit, yielding to oblivion's waves,
Will flow to you, ye shades in haze eternal.
A son of earth, o'er-driven and weary, comes,
Let him find restoration in your peace !
What do I hear ? that rustle in the branches ?
What is that murmur issuing from the twilight ? 10
Even now they come to look on the new guest.
What troop is this that cometh splendidly
Like festal gathering of a royal house ?
In gladness and in peace they walk together,
The old and young, the men and women all ;
Of godlike mien are they and like each other,
The wandering shapes—my ancestors ; Thyestes
With Atreus link'd in close familiar converse ;
And children run around them in glad play.
Is there no enmity betwixt you now ? 20
Did your revenge die out when died your sunlight :
Then may I too be welcomed ; I may dare

To take my place amongst your stately train.
Welcome, ye fathers ! He who bids hail,
He is Orestes, last of your line :
What ye had sown that hath he reap'd :
Laden with curses, he hath come down.
Yet easier here each burden is borne.
Take him, oh take him, into your band !
Atreus, I honour thee, thee too, Thyestes ; 30
Here we are all from enmity freed.
Show me that father whom I beheld
Living, but once. Art thou my father ?
Hand in hand lead'st thou my mother with thee ?
Dares Clytemnestra give thee her hand ?
Then might Orestes draw nigh unto her,
Say to her, ' Mother, look on thy son ! '—
Look on your son ! and give him your welcome :
Ever on earth 'twas wont of our house,
Fair salutation as signal for murder : 40
Ay, and the race of old Tantalus hath
Joys of its own in the realm beyond night !
' Welcome ' ye call, me ye receive ;
Bring me to him, the Progenitor, now ;
Where is the Ancient ? him would I see,
See the dear head most honour'd of all,
Who in their council sat with the Gods.
Say, what is this ? reluctant ye seem :
What of that godlike one ? Aileth him aught ?
Woe ! Woe is me ! Gods over-mighty 50

Have on the hero's breast cruellest pains
With fetters of iron riveted fast !

SCENE III

Orestes, Iphigeneia, Pylades.

Ores. Are ye come down already also ?

Sister, 'tis well ! Yet lacks Electra ;
May a kind God our last one send us
Swiftly below with gentle arrows.
Thee, my poor friend, I needs must pity !
Come with us ! come to Pluto's throne !
Give we our host his new guests' greeting !

Iph. Brother and Sister, who in the broad heavens
By day and night confer upon mankind
The beauteous gift of light, and may not shine 10
On those gone down below, oh, save us now,
A brother and a sister ! Thou, Diana,
Lovest thy gracious brother more than all
That earth and heaven can offer ; Thou dost turn
Thy maiden face to his eternal light
In silent longing. Leave not my sole brother,
Long lost and found so late, to rave in darkness.
And if that purpose of thy will, for which
Thou didst conceal me here, be now fulfill'd,
If thou the blessed help will give to us, 20
To me through him, and unto him through me,

Then loose him from the bonds of this his curse
Ere precious hours for rescue slip away !

Pyl. Dost thou not know us and this sacred grove ?
And know this light that shines not on the dead ?
Dost thou not feel thy friend's arm and thy sister's,
That hold thee fast, that hold thee living still ?
Take a strong grip of us, no empty shadows !
Attend my words ! conceive the thing aright !
Collect thyself ! each moment now is precious, 30
On slender thread our safe return is hanging ;
Methinks it is a kindly Fate that spins it.

Ores. (to Iphigeneia) Now for the first time with a
heart set free

Let me within thine arms find purest joy !
Gods ! who with fiery might pass o'er the skies
To break up and consume the heavy clouds,
Sternly benignant, answering long prayer
For rain, outpouring it at last on earth,
Wild floods with thunder's voice and wind's uproar ;
Who then, anon, gave easement to men's fears, 40
Bringing them blessings ; and their scared amaze
Change to glad looks, and utterance of thanks,
When the sun, bursting out anew, doth mirror
His light a thousandfold on rain-drench'd leaves,
And Iris, smiling, many-coloured, parts
With light hand the grey veil of the last clouds ;
Thus, let me too, now in my sister's arms,
And on my friend's true breast, with thankfulness,

Taste and hold fast the bliss ye grant to me.
 The Curse is loosed ! My heart doth tell me this !
 And the Eumenides depart ; I hear them 51
 Going down to Tartarus, and behind them closing
 Its brazen doors with far-off thunderous clang :
 The earth breathes forth a quickening scent, that
 biddeth

Me to the chase, in her broad open spaces,
 Of joys of living and of worthy deeds.

Pyl. Waste not the time, for it is scant of measure !
 Let's leave it to the wind that swells our sails
 To waft our exultations to Olympus !
 Come ! we need now swift council and decision. 60

ACT IV

SCENE I

Iphigeneia.

Iph. When They in the heavens
Devise for an earthborn
Many a tangle and twirl,
When for him They prepare,
From pleasure to sorrow,
From sorrow to pleasure,
Transition that shaketh the depths;
Then for him They upraise—
Anigh his own city,
Or in some region remote, 10
So that help may be ready,
In hour when he needs it—
A calm-minded friend.

Give to our Pylades blessings, O ye gods,
And to all things he e'er may undertake!
He is the arm of the young man in the battle :

He, the clear eye of the old man in the council :
For quiet his soul is, ever it keeps
Peace, inexhaustible holiest good.
And for the hearts that to and fro are driven, 20
Counsel and help from out its depths he brings.
Me from my brother hath he torn ; I gazed
And gazed on him again half-stupefied,
Scarce could I grasp the joy as mine ; I held
Him fast within my arms ; I heeded not
The imminence of danger compassing us.
Now they have gone to set in train their project
Down to the sea, where in a hidden creek
Their comrades with the ship await their signal.
And cunning speech they put into my mouth 30
To give the King in answer should he send
Urging completion of the sacrifice.
I see that like a child I must be led.
Alas, I have not learn'd dissimulation,
Nor can I any mortal overreach !
A curse on lying ! It brings no relief
Unto the heart, like words we speak in truth,
But ill at ease it setteth us ; the lie
Hurteth its secret forger ; it returns
Like a shot arrow by a god diverted 40
Which, missing aim, flies back to hit the archer.
From fear to fear my heart goes to and fro !
What if, when on the unconsecrated shore,
My brother hath again been seized upon

By Furies? Haply they have been discover'd !
I seem to hear the approach of armed men.
What ho ! in haste there comes a messenger,
Sent by the King ! My heart is beating fast !
Within me is my soul disquieted,
Because I needs must look him in the face, 50
This man they bid me meet with lying words.

SCENE II

Iphigeneia, Arkas.

Ark. Priestess ! delay not, speed the sacrifice !
The monarch waits, the people are expectant.
Iph. I would have done my duty and thy bidding,
Had there not interposed, all unforeseen,
A hindrance between me and its fulfilment.
Ark. What hindrance is there to the King's command ?
Iph. Hindrance of chance of which we are not masters.
Ark. Tell me what is it ! that I may acquaint him
At once ; he is resolved on these men's death.
Iph. The Gods are not resolved on it, as yet ! 10
The elder of these men is bloodguilty ;
He hath shed life of one of his near kin,
And for this cause the Furies hunt him down,
Yea, even within the sanctuary itself
The evil spirit took him, and his presence

This pure abode hath desecrated. Now
I and my virgins hasten to the sea,
There for a secret hallowing to lave
In its fresh waves the image of the Goddess.
Be our procession's silence undisturb'd !

20

Ark. With all despatch I will acquaint the King
Of this new hindrance ; and till he permits
Do not thou enter on the sacred work.

Iph. This matter doth concern the Priestess only.

Ark. Event so strange the King should also hear.

Iph. Nor his command nor counsel altereth aught.

Ark. Often for form's sake we consult our masters.

Iph. Do not thou urge requests I must refuse.

Ark. Do not refuse requests so right and needful.

Iph. I yield, if only thou wilt not delay.

30

Ark. Swiftly I'll bear these tidings to the camp,

And hither swiftly bring his answer back.

Oh, if one message I might bring to him

All would be solved that now perplexeth us !

Thou didst not hearken to a true man's counsel.

Iph. All I could do, I have done willingly.

Ark. There is still time for thee to change thy mind.

Iph. Our minds are not in our own power to alter.

Ark. Impossible thou deemest what costs thee trouble.

Iph. Thou deem'st it possible for thy wish deceives
thee.

40

Ark. Dost thou with such composure hazard all ?

Iph. To the Gods' hands I have committed it.

Ark. Their wont is to use man for man's salvation.

Iph. They need but raise a finger to do all.

Ark. In thine own hands it lies, I tell thee this.

Naught but the monarch's irritated mood

Sendeth these strangers to a cruel death.

'Tis long now since our soldiery have ceased

To look for the old, cruel, bloody rites.

Yea, many a man amongst them hath himself, 50

When cast by chance upon an alien shore,

Found how divine a kindly human face

Seemeth to the poor wanderer, who, driven

From door to door in a strange land, doth meet it.

Turn not away from us what thou mayest do !

Easy 'twill be for thee to end the work

Thou hast begun for us ; the charity,

That cometh down from heaven in human guise,

Nowhere more readily may build its kingdom

Than where a people newly risen, half-savage, 60

Yet strong and brave, and full of vigorous life,

Is all unholpen 'mid its dark vague fears,

Bearing the burdens of the human lot.

Iph. Why dost thou shake my soul ? thou never canst

Sway it at all according to thy wish.

Ark. While there is time his trouble no man grudges,

Nor repetition of his good advice.

Iph. Trouble thou givest thyself, and givest me

pain ;

And both are useless, therefore let me be !

Ark. But 'tis thy pain I call to my assistance ; 70
Pain is a friend that giveth sound advice.

Iph. Pain mightily hath gripp'd my soul, and yet
In nowise riddeth it of its repugnance.

Ark. And doth a lovely soul repugnance feel
To benefits a noble heart doth offer ?

Iph. Yes, if the noble heart, as ill beseems,
Claimeth, in lieu of thanks, my hand in marriage.

Ark. If in our heart is lack of inclination,
Ne'er are we at a loss for an excuse.
I will acquaint the Prince with what has pass'd. 80
Ah, wouldst thou but recall to thine own mind
How nobly he hath borne himself towards thee
From thy first coming hither to this day !

SCENE III

Iphigeneia (alone)

Iph. All of a sudden, in hour inopportune,
My heart hath been turned round, by listening
To this man's words, and I am sore afraid !
For like the incoming tide, that swiftly swells
And in a rush o'erflows the rocks that lie
Amid the seashore's sand, the flood of joy
Swell'd, and it wholly cover'd me. I held
Within my very arms the Impossible.
It seemed as if again a cloud had come

And gently folded me within itself, 10
Lifting me up from earth, and cradling me
In that sweet sleep the Goddess most benign
Laid on my brow, when to her arms she took me,
What time she rescued me. One thought alone—
My brother—held my heart so mightily
I hearken'd only to his friend's advice,
And my whole soul press'd forward to one end—
To save those two. And Tauris lay behind me,
Of no more import than the barren cliffs
Of some lone isle which mariners pass by, 20
And lose from sight as they sail on. But now
The voice of this good man hath waken'd me,
Recalling to my mind that also here
Are men whom I would thus forsake. To me
Now doubly odious treachery doth seem !
O heart of mine, be still ! Dost thou begin
To doubt and waver ? Thy solitude's firm ground
Must thou abandon ? Taking ship again
The tossing waves will seize thee. In dim fear
The world and thine own self thou wilt misdeem. 30

SCENE IV

Iphigeneia, Pylades.

Pyl. Where is she ? I have joyful tidings for her,
To give her quickly—news of our deliverance.

Iph. Thou seest me oppress'd by care and waiting
For the sure consolation thou dost promise.

Pyl. Thy brother is restored ! we walk'd together
In happy converse o'er the rocks and sands
Of the unconsecrated shore, unheeding
How far behind we had left the sacred grove.
And gloriously, and yet more gloriously,
Around his head and its bright crispéd locks 10
There seem'd to flame the aureole of youth ;
From his full eye shone courage and high hope,
His freed heart gave itself to jubilation,
Saving thee, who his saviour wert, and me.

Iph. Blessed be thou ! and may there never pass
From out thy lips, that these good words have
spoken,

A lamentation or a sound of pain !

Pyl. I bring thee more than that, for like a prince
Good luck doth come with a fair company.
Our comrades we have found by happy chance ; 20
Within a rock-girt bay they had conceal'd
Their ship, and they themselves sat, sadly waiting ;
But when they saw thy brother, one and all
Raised shouts of joy, and urgently besought
That we would speed the hour of our departure.
Eager each rower seem'd to grasp his oar,
And even a wind from off the land sprang up ;
All felt at once its softly whispering wings.
Hasten we therefore ; lead me to the temple ;

Let me pass in within the sanctuary, there 30
With reverence to clasp our wishes' goal.
My strength unaided is enough to bear
The Goddess' image on my stalwart shoulder ;
I long to feel the burden much desired.

[He goes towards the temple during these last words without perceiving that Iphigeneia is not following: at length he turns round.]

But thou art standing—lingering—tell me why?
Thou keepest silent ! thou dost seem bewilder'd !
Is there new hindrance to our happiness?
Speak ! Hast thou sent as message to the King
The prudent words that we agreed upon?

Iph. This have I done, dear friend : yet wilt thou
chide me. 40

The very sight of thee is mute reproach !
From the King came a messenger, and I
Spake to him what thou didst put into my mouth.
Whereat he seem'd to wonder, and desired
Most urgently that I would let him first
Acquaint the king of this strange ceremony,
And learn concerning it his will and pleasure ;
And now I am awaiting his return.

Pyl. Alas for us ! new perils now are hovering
Around our heads. Why hadst thou not the wisdom
To use thy sacerdotal rights as veil ? 51

Iph. As a veil ne'er at any time I used them.

Pyl. And so, pure soul, thou wilt thyself and us

Iphigeneia in Tauris

ACT IV. SC. 4.

Bring to an utter ruin. Why, oh why
Did not I this foresee, and lesson thee
How thus shouldst also this demand evade?

Iph. Blame me alone : the fault is, I well feel,
Mine and mine only. And yet how could I
In any other fashion meet this man
Who urgently, most reasonably ask'd
What my own heart admitted was his right? 60

Pyl. Dangers are thickening round us ! Yet even so
Let us not be afraid, nor heedlessly
And in rash haste betray ourselves. Do thou
Tranquilly await the messenger's return,
And be thou firm, whate'er his message be ;
For to the Priestess, not the King, belongs
The ordering of this consecrated rite.
And should he maké request to see the stranger
Who with the grievous frenzy is afflicted, 70
Give this excuse—that thou hast kept us two
Within the temple in safe custody ;
Thus thou wilt gain us time for speedy flight,
Bearing away with us the sacred treasure,
Of which unworthy is this barbarous folk.
Most favouring omens doth Apollo send us,
And godlike he his promise hath made good
Ere its conditions we have yet fulfill'd.
Orestes now is free, is healed. O winds,
Us and our liberated one bear kindly, 80
First to the rocky isle where dwells the God,

Then to Mycenæ, so that she may live
Again, and the ancestral Gods arise
From ashes of their quenched hearths, with joy
Kindling anew fair fire within their dwellings.
Thy hand shall be the first to bring sweet incense,
From golden censers strewing it. With thee
Over that threshold life and healing come ;
By thee the Curse hath been redeemed ; thy people
By thee with life's fresh flowers are newly crown'd.

Iph. Dear friend, in listening to those words of thine 91
My soul is struck by their warm beams and turneth
Itself to the sweetness of their comforting,
Even as a flower turneth towards the sun.
Oh how delectable is the assuring counsel
Of a friend's presence ! and for lack of it—
That heavenly strength—the solitary heart
Droopeth in silence. Locked within one bosom
Thought and resolve but slowly ripen ; love
Bids them unfold to their perfection quickly. 100

Pyl. Farewell ! our comrades wait in expectation ;
I hasten now to set their minds at rest
And straightway I return to wait conceal'd
Amongst the rocks and brushwood for thy signal.
What thought is troubling thee, for suddenly
Some silent pain o'ershadows thy clear brow ?

Iph. Forgive me ! as light clouds flit o'er the sun,
So o'er my soul light fears and troubles flit
And pass away.

Iphigeneia in Tauris

ACT IV. SC. 4.

- Pyl.* Nay, fear not thou, for fear
Is wont to make a traitorous alliance 110
With danger ; trusty comrades are the two.
- Iph.* I call it honourable fear that warns me
Against the treachery of deceiving, robbing,
The King who hath been as my second father.
- Pyl.* Thou fleest from one about to slay thy brother.
- Iph.* The same who ever hath been good to me.
- Pyl.* 'Tis no ingratitude when need compels.
- Iph.* Ingratitude it is—though need excuses.
- Pyl.* Excused by Gods and man thou surely art.
- Iph.* But my own heart is not at peace in this. 120
- Pyl.* Too strict requirement is a cloak for pride.
- Iph.* I do not probe my heart, I only feel.
- Pyl.* Feeling aright, thou must revere thyself.
- Iph.* Only the stainless heart in self rejoices.
- Pyl.* Stainless thou mayest well have kept thyself
Within thy temple. We are taught by life
To be less rigid with ourselves, with others ;
And this thou too wilt learn. (This race of ours
Is marvellously made and fashion'd, link'd
Throughout itself, with curious interlacements,
So that no soul may ever stand alone 131
In self-sufficing purity, apart
From other souls' entanglings. Yea, moreover,
We are not set as judges of ourselves ;
To walk on straight and heed the path before him
Is first and foremost duty of a man ;

Things he hath done he seldom rightly values ;
Far seldomer the things he now is doing.

Iph. Almost thou dost persuade me to thy mind.

Pyl. Why need persuasion when we have no choice ?
To rescue thee, thy brother, and his friend 141
One only road is open : need we question ?

Iph. Oh, let me linger ! Thou thyself wouldst not
Calmly do any man such grievous wrong
To whom, for so much good, thou wert a debtor !

Pyl. If utter ruin comes on us, there awaits
Bitterer reproach for thee which thy despair
Will bring thee then. I see thou art not used
To suffer loss ; thou wilt not sacrifice
One grain of truth to avert a grievous woe. 150

Iph. Ah, if my heart were only as a man's !
Able, when once it boldly forms a project,
To shut all contrary voices from its ears !

Pyl. In vain thou dost refuse ; with her iron hand
Necessity commands, and its grave beck
Is law supreme, to which the Gods themselves
Must yield submission : silently she rules,
Sister uncounsell'd of eternal Fate.
Bear whatsoe'er she lays on thee ; and do
Whate'er she biddeth thee ! The rest thou knowest.
When shortly I return, 'twill be to take 161
Safety's fair seal, given by thy sacred hand.

SCENE V

Iphigeneia (alone).

Iph. I must obey him, for my near and dear
I see in urgent danger. Yea, alas,
More and more cause for fear my own fate gives me!
Must I forego that hope so beautiful,
Nursed in the silence of my lonely life?
Must the Curse have its empery for ever?
May our race ne'er uplift itself again
With a new blessing on it? All things wane;
Best happiness and life's most beauteous strength
Grow wearied out at last—why not the Curse? 10
Then was my hope in vain that, guarded here
Apart from fortunes of my kindred, I
Some day hereafter, with pure hands, pure heart,
Might cleanse from guilt our dwelling, foully stain'd?
Scarce was my brother heal'd within my arms
Swiftly and wondrously from fearful ills,
Scarce had the ship, long-pray'd for, come at last
To bear me safe to port in my old home,
My father's world, when with her iron hand
This deaf Necessity doth lay on me 20
A double burden; I, by her command,
Must steal the sacred image, much revered,
Committed to my care, and him deceive,

The man to whom I owe my life, my lot.
 Now at the last may no revolt spring up
 Within my heart, the hate, deep-seated, nursed
 By Titans—the old Gods—towards you, Olympians,
 To tear my tender breast with vulture claws !
 Save me, and save your image in my soul !

Comes to mine ears the sound of that old song 30
 I had forgotten—gladly I forgot it—
 The Parcae's lay, which shuddering they sang
 When Tantalus from his golden seat was hurl'd.
 They suffer'd with their noble friend, and wrathful
 Their hearts were and their song was terrible,
 And to us—brother, sisters—in our childhood,
 Our nurse would croon it, while intent I listen'd.

Behoveth to mortals
 The fear of the Gods !
 In hands everlasting 40
 Hold they the lordship,
 Able to use it
 As pleaseth Them best.

He doubly should fear them
 Whom they have exalted.
 On clouds and on hill-tops
 Their seats are made ready
 Round tables of gold.

Ariseth a discord ;
 Down hurl'd are the guests, 50

Dishonour'd, confounded,
To fathomless Night :
And vainly await they,
In bonds of the darkness,
Some justice of doom.

But They—They are biding
In festals eternal,
At tables all golden ;
And striding from mountain
To mountain they pass :
From deepest abysses,
Where stifle the Titans,
Upsteameth their breath,
Its reek sacrificial
As light cloud is wafted.

60

Still turn they, the Rulers,
Their eyes and their favour
From all of the race :
They fear in the grandson
The silently-speaking,
Once well-beloved features
Ancestral to see.

70

So sang they, the Parcæ ;
So heard he their singing,
The Ancient, the outlaw
In hollows nocturnal :—
He thinks of his children,
And shaketh his head.

ACT V

SCENE I

Thoas, Arkas

- Ark.* I am perplex'd, and must confess I know not
Where at this moment to direct suspicions.
Is it the prisoners who are plotting flight
In secrecy? or can it be the Priestess,
Aiding them and abetting? Rumours grow
About a ship that brought these two men here,
And now lies hidden somewhere in a cove.
The madness of this man, the lustral rite
As holy pretext for delay, would seem
Still further call for caution and mistrust. 10
- Tho.* Summon the Priestess quickly here to me!
Then go in haste, and make the strictest search
Along the shore, from yonder promontory
As far as to Diana's grove; but spare
Its hallow'd depths. Set careful watch around,
And, as your wont, seize whomsoe'er ye find.

SCENE II

Thoas (alone)

Tho. A rage alternates horridly within me,
Now against her who once had seem'd to me
So holy, now against myself, because
I, by my too indulgent kindness, form'd her
For this her treachery. Folks grow accusom'd
To slavery; deprived of freedom wholly
They quickly learn obedience. Had she fallen
Into the rough hands of my ancestors,
If spared by sacred rage of theirs, well-pleased
She would have been to save her life alone, 10
And thank her luck for it : the blood of strangers
She on the altar would have shed, and named
Duty what was necessity.
My kindness now evokes from her
Desires too bold. It was in vain I hoped
To bind her to myself; her mind is set
Upon a life of her own choice and purpose,
She won my heart from me by flattery,
And now, when I am proof against it, she
To cunning and deception has recourse. 20
My favour seems her old outworn possession.

SCENE III

Iphigeneia, Thoas

Iph. Thou hast ask'd for me : what brings thee to us
here ?

Tho. Thou hast postponed the sacrifice. Say where-
fore ?

Iph. To Arkas I have clearly told all this.

Tho. More fully I would hear it from thyself.

Iph. The Goddess grants thee respite to consider.

Tho. Seems well consider'd for thyself, this respite !

Iph. And if within thee now thy heart is harden'd
To this resolve of cruelty, why come
Thyself ? A king desiring inhumanities
Finds menials and enough for pay or praise, 10
Eager to snatch at half the curse o' the deed,
While his own presence stainless doth remain ;
In a great cloud he sits devising death,
His messengers bring flaming ruin down
Upon the heads of luckless wights below ;
But he—serenely on his heights he soars
Forth through the storm—God unapproachable !

Tho. A wild song soundeth from her holy lips !

Iph. No priestess I, but Agamemnon's daughter !
The unknown maiden's words thou didst respect,
And dost thou now imperiously command 21

The Princess? Nay, I have learn'd from earliest years

Obedience to my parents first, and then
To a Divinity, and in obeying
My soul found fairest freedom ; but I ne'er
To harsh words or rude utterance of a man
Have learn'd submission, whether there or here !

Tho. An ancient law commands thee, and not I.

Iph. We eagerly lay hold upon a law
That furnishes our passion with a weapon ; 30
To me another law doth speak, an older,
And bids me to withstand thee—the command
Sacred to hold the stranger.

Tho. Seemeth to me these prisoners are right near
Thy heart. So much thy sympathy perturbs thee
That thou the primary wise word forgettest—
Rulers should never be provoked to wrath !

Iph. Whether I speak or hold my peace, thou knowest
Always what is within my heart, and always
Abides. Doth not the common lot of man, 40
Call'd to remembrance, open to compassion
Doors of the hardest heart ? how much more mine
In them I see myself, for I have quiver'd
Myself before the altar ; solemnly
Death premature was closing in around
The kneeling girl, already the knife hover'd
About to pierce that bosom full of life—
Then in a horror all my soul was whirl'd

My eyes were darken'd, and I awoke up—saved !
Are we, to whom the Gods gave grace, not bound
To share that grace with lives less fortunate ? 51
Thou knowest this, knowest me, yet dost thou force
me !

Tho. Obey in this thine office, not thy lord.

Iph. Cease ! with fair garb of words bedeck not thus
Force that exults o'er weakness of a woman :
I—I am not less freeborn than a man :
If Agamemnon's son now stood before thee,
And thou desiredst things that should not be,
He, for defence of his soul's rights, would bring
His sword and his strong arm, while I have nought
But words : behoveth it a generous man 61
To give respect unto a woman's words !

Tho. And more than I would give a brother's sword !

Iph. Fortunes of arms may change from hour to hour,
And a wise warrior ne'er will scorn his foe ;
Not helpless against empery of might
Hath Nature left the weak ; she giveth craft
And pleasure in its use. She teacheth arts—
To seem to yield, delay, and circumvent :
Brute force deserves to have such weapons used.

Tho. But foresight wisely countervaieth craft. 71

Iph. And a clear soul will have no use for it !

Tho. Take care lest thus thou dost condemn thyself !

Iph. Oh, if thou couldst but see how I have striven
To drive off bravely at its first attack,

An evil fate that seeks to seize my soul !
Weaponless do I stand before thee here ?
Fair prayer, the gracious olive-branch, more mighty
In woman's hand than sword or arms, thou didst
Fling roughly back : now what remains to me 80
For the defending of mine inmost heart ?
A cry to the Goddess for a miracle ?

Is there no strength within my own soul's depths ?

Tho. Methinks the fate of these two strangers doth
Give thee immoderate care ! Say, who are these
For whom thy spirit is so mightily roused ?

Iph. They are—they seem—I take them to be Greeks.

Tho. Thy countrymen ? And doubtless they renew
For thee the beauteous picture of return !

Iph. (*after a silence*). Hath man alone a right to be the
doer 90

Of deeds beyond all precedent ? shall he only
Clasp to heroic breast the impossible ?
What is it we call great ? What lifts and thrills
The soul of him who tells it o'er and o'er ?
Is it not something some brave heart began
Wherein success had seem'd unlikeliest ?
He who by night steals over, all alone,
Into the foeman's camp, as sudden fire,
Falls on them, sleeping, waking, till at last,
Press'd by their rally, he turns back again 100
With horses of the enemy laden with booty,
Doth only such an one win praise ? or only

He who thinks scorn of easy paths and safe,
And ranges boldly over hill and forest,
To rid some lone tract of its brigand hordes ?
Is nothing left for us ? A tender woman,
Must she divest herself of inborn rights
And roughly meet the rough, like Amazons
Robbing you of your right to the sword, avenge
With blood her long oppression ? In my breast
Rises and falls an enterprise audacious : III
I shall have no escape from sore reproach
Nor heavy woe, if this should fail with me ;
Only—I take and lay it on Your lap !
If Ye be true, as men have lauded You,
Give proof thereof, and stand by me in this,
And glorify through me the Truth ! Yea ! King,
Learn that in secret hath a fraud been forged :
It is in vain thou askest for the prisoners ;
They are away, to look for friends of theirs, 120
Who, with their ship, await them on the shore ;
The elder, he who here was seized with madness
Which now hath left him, he Orestes is—
My brother—and the other his familiar,
His childhood's friend, whose name is Pylades :
From Delphi hath Apollo sent him hither
With a divine command to steal away
Diana's image, and to bring to him
The sister. And for this he promiseth
To him whom, guilty of his mother's blood, 130

The Furies have pursued, his liberation.
And now the two of us, the last remains
Of all the house of Tantalus, I have laid
Within thy hands. Destroy us if thou darest.

Tho. Thou thinkest the rude Scythian, the Barbarian,
Will hearken to the voice of truth and mercy
Which the Greek Atreus heard not?

Iph. It is heard
By every man, born under every sky,
Within whose heart unhinder'd flows, and pure,
Life's wellspring. King! what are thy thoughts
for me 140

In the deep silence of thy soul? Wilt thou
Destroy us utterly? Then kill me first!
For now, since no deliverance any more
Remains for us, I feel in all its horror
The danger into which I voluntarily
In over-haste have flung my well-beloved!
Woe, woe is me! for I shall see them bound
Before my eyes! And with what countenance
Can I take leave of him, my brother, of him
Murder'd by me? I never more can look 150
Into those eyes that I have loved so well!

Tho. And such a web as this have these deceivers,
Spinning their artful fictions, thrown around
Her head—this woman for so long secluded,
Credulous of what she wishes.

Iph. No! O King!

No ! I myself might be deceived, but these
Are true and faithful. If thou findest them
Other than this, then let them fall ; and me
Cast from thy presence, punishing my folly
By banishment to some lorn rocky isle. 160
But if this man be my long-pray'd-for brother,
And well-beloved, set us free ; be friend
To us the brother, sister, as thou wert
First to the sister only. Fallen is my father
Through guilt of his own wife—she, through her son :
The last hope of the house of Atreus rests
On him alone. Let me go over now,
That I with a pure heart, pure hands, may purge
Our house from guilt. Thou wilt make good thy
word ;

If to my kindred ever a return 170
Should open for me, thou didst swear to me
That thou wouldst let me go—and this is now.
A monarch doth not as the common folk,
Give a consent to rid himself awhile
Of a petitioner, nor doth he promise
Upon a chance he hopes will ne'er occur ;
The height of his own dignity he feels
First in his power to bless the long-expectant.

Tho. Indignantly, as fire, in self-defence
Hissing in struggle against water, seeks 180
To wipe out its opponent, in my breast
Anger defends itself against thy words.

Iph. Let grace glow forth, like as the holy light
Of quiet sacrificial flame, for me,
Crown'd with the song of praise and thanks and
joy.

Tho. That voice, how often hath it soothed my breast !

Iph. Oh, give me now thy hand as sign of peace !

Tho. Thou askest much within so short a time.

Iph. A good deed needeth no deliberation.

Tho. It needeth much, for ills may follow good. 190

Iph. 'Tis doubt that turneth good to ill. Reflect not :
Grant my desire, as thine own heart doth feel.

SCENE IV

Orestes (armed), Iphigeneia, Thoas.

Ores. (his back to the spectators). Now for a double
effort ! Keep them back !

Yet a few moments ! Yield not to the throng !

Cover a path to reach the ship, for me

And for my sister !

[*To Iphigeneia without seeing the King.*

Come ! we are betrayed !

Hasten ! short time remains to us for flight !

[*He sees the King.*

Tho. (grasping his sword). A naked sword may no man
in my presence

Bear with impunity.

Iph. Profane ye not
With murderous hand the dwelling of the Goddess.
Command your people to stand still, and hear ye
The Priestess, hear the sister !

Ores. Tell me who 10
Is he that threatens us ?

Iph. Respect in him
The King who hath my second father been ;
Forgive me, brother, for my childlike heart
Hath the whole fate of us laid absolutely
Within his hand—I have avow'd your plot,
And I have saved my soul from treachery !

Ores. And will he grant us peaceable return ?

Iph. Thy flashing sword forbids me to make answer.

Ores. (*sheathing his sword*). Then speak ! Thou seest I
hearken to thy words.

SCENE V

*The Same, Pylades, Arkas follows him, both with
drawn swords.*

Pyl. Make no delay ! Our followers are rallying
For a last effort ; they have been hard press'd
And yield, and are driven slowly back to sea.
What is this princely parley I find here ?
This is the honour'd presence of the King !

Ark. Calmly, as it beseemeth thee, O King,
Thou standest opposite thy foes, and straightway
Shall their audacity find punishment ;
Their followers give way, retreat ; their ship
Is ours ; a word from thee, 'twill be in flames! 10

Tho. Go, bid my people to forbear from arms !
And whilst we talk let no man hurt our foe.

[*Exit Arkas.*]

Ores. This I accept. Go thou, my trusty friend,
Collect our other folk, and quietly
Await the issue that the Gods ordain.

[*Exit Pylades.*]

SCENE VI

Iphigeneia, Thoas, Orestes.

Ip'h. Free me from fears ere ye begin to speak,
For much do I some grievous quarrel dread,
If thou, O King, to equity's mild voice
Wilt lend no ear, nor thou, my brother, keep
Controll'd the impetuousness of thy youth !

Tho. I hold in check my wrath, for this beseems
The elder man. Now, answer me, wherewith
Dost thou give evidence that thou art son
Of Agamemnon, and her brother ?

Ores.

Here

Is the sword wherewith he slew brave men of Troy :

I took it from his murderer, and pray'd 11
The Heavenly Powers that they would lend to me
The stout heart and the arm, the luck in war,
Of the great King, and grant me fairer death.
Now choose from out the flower of all your host
Your best and strongest man to stand against me :
Where'er the earth doth rear heroic sons
This trial to no stranger is denied.

Tho. This privilege hath ancient custom never
Here to a stranger granted.

Ores. 20 Then begin
This novel custom betwixt thee and me ;
The ruler's noble deed hath following
Of all the nation, sanctioned thus as law.
And let not this my combat be alone
For our own freedom, but let me, the stranger,
Be champion for all strangers. If I fall,
Be their doom spoken with my own ; but if
Fortune of victory be granted me,
Then here let no man ever step ashore
Unmet by looks of helpful charity, 30
And comforted let each man hence depart.

Tho. Young man, thou seemest to me not unworthy
Of ancestry of which thou mak'st thy boast ;
Great is the number of brave men and noble
Who follow me ; yet even with my years
I can confront a foe, and I am ready
To try with thee the battle's ordeal.

Iph. This must not be ! O King, there is no need
Of this bloodthirsty trial ! Let go the sword !
Think of me, what my fate would be ! Swift combat
Immortalises man ; he, if he falls, 41
Hath, for his portion, laud in minstrels' lays.
But of the tears—her never-ending tears,
The woman who is left behind, forsaken,—
No world of after-time doth take account ;
No poet singeth of the thousand days
And nights wept through, wherein some silent soul,
In its vain yearning to recall the friend,
The lost, so swiftly gone, consumes itself !
I, mine own self, at first, felt fear that warn'd 50
To have a care lest this should be some fraud
Of robbers who would carry me away
For bondslave from my refuge here ; I sought
In closest questioning to learn from them
Each circumstance, demanded proofs, and now
My heart hath certitude. See here ! this mark
On his right hand—three stars—'twas visible
Even on the day when he was born. The Priest
Explain'd its import for a sign that he
With the same hand should do some dreadful deed ;
And further confirmation do I find 61
In this, the scar that cleaves his eyebrow. Once,
When he was still a child, Electra let him
Fall from her arms ; she was impetuous then
And careless—this her way ; his forehead struck

Against a tripod. This is he ! And need I
Tell thee that he doth bear his father's features,
Tell thee that, at the sight of him, my heart
Leap'd up and sang, as proof of my assurance ?

Tho. And if thy words should take all doubt away, 70
And if I bind my wrath within my bosom,
It still remains that weapons must decide
This matter betwixt us. I see no peace ;
For ye are come, thou hast thyself avow'd,
As robbers ; ye would steal from me the image
Of the great Goddess. Do ye think that I
Will calmly suffer this ? The Greek casts oft
A greedy eye on the Barbarian's treasures,
His golden fleece, his horses, his fair daughters ;
Not always did their craft and valour bring them
With their much-long'd-for booty safely home ! 81

Ores. O King, the Image need not set a strife
Betwixt us ; for e'en now we recognise
The error that a God cast o'er our minds
Like as a veil, what time he sent us hither ;
For counsel I besought him, praying him
That he would free me from the haunting Furies ;
Then spake he, ' When to Greece thou bring'st the
sister,
Her who against her will in Tauris bides,
Within the sanctuary—the Curse will end.' 90
And we took this to mean Apollo's sister,
But he—it was of thee he thought ; and now,

Iphigeneia in Tauris

ACT V. SC. 6.

Thou holy maiden, thy strict bonds are loosed ;
To thine own kindred thou art given again.
Thy touch it was that heal'd me ; in thine arms
The evil spirit for the last time clutch'd me
With all its claws, and shook my inmost marrow
Horribly ; then—as snake to its hole—it vanish'd !
And now through thee the large light of the day
Doth gladden me anew. Fair and majestic 100
The counsels of the Goddess stand reveal'd ;
Like as a holy image, whereunto
The city's fate immutable is bound
By secret words divine, she bore thee off,
Thee who art guardian-spirit of our house ;
She kept thee safe in holy quietude
For blessing of thy brother and thy people ;
And now, when in the whole wide earth there
seem'd

No hope for us, thou givest us all things back.
Let thy soul now, O King, incline to peace ! 110
Hinder her not, that thus she may accomplish
The consecration of our father's house,
And give me back its halls, redeem'd from curse,
And set upon my head the ancestral crown.
Requite thou now the blessing that she brought
thee,
Letting me in my nearer right rejoice.
Valour and craft, the chiefest vaunt of man,
Are put to shame by perfect verity

Through this high soul ; and clear and childlike
trust,

Trust in a noble man, hath found reward. 120

Iph. Think on thy promise, let thy heart be moved
By pleadings of this honest, faithful mouth.
Look on us now ! not often lies before thee
Opening for act so noble, and thou canst not
Deny us this our prayer. Oh, grant it now !

Tho. Then go !

Iph. Not thus, my King, without a blessing,
Under displeasure ; thus I will not part
From thee. Oh, banish us not utterly,
But let the rights of welcome guests have rule
'Twixt thee and us ; so shall we not be sunder'd,
Parted for evermore. Most dear and honour'd, 131
As my own father thou hast been to me,
And this abideth stamp'd upon my soul ;
If ever to mine ears is brought again,
By even the very humblest of thy people,
Sound of the tongue that I was wont to hear
Dwelling amongst you, or if e'er I see
On one, the poorest even, your country's garb,
He shall have welcome from me as a God,
And I myself will spread a couch for him, 140
And bid him to a seat beside the hearth,
Asking him but for thee and how thou farest.
May the Gods give thee for thy charity,
And all thy noble acts, a worthy meed !

Iphigeneia in Tauris

ACT V. SC. 6.

Farewell ! Oh, turn thy face towards us ! Give
back

To me some kindly parting word, for then
The wind will seem to swell our sails more softly ;
The tears will flow more gently from her eyes
Who leaveth thee. Farewell ! and as a pledge
Of the old friendship give me thy right hand. 150

Tho. Farewell !



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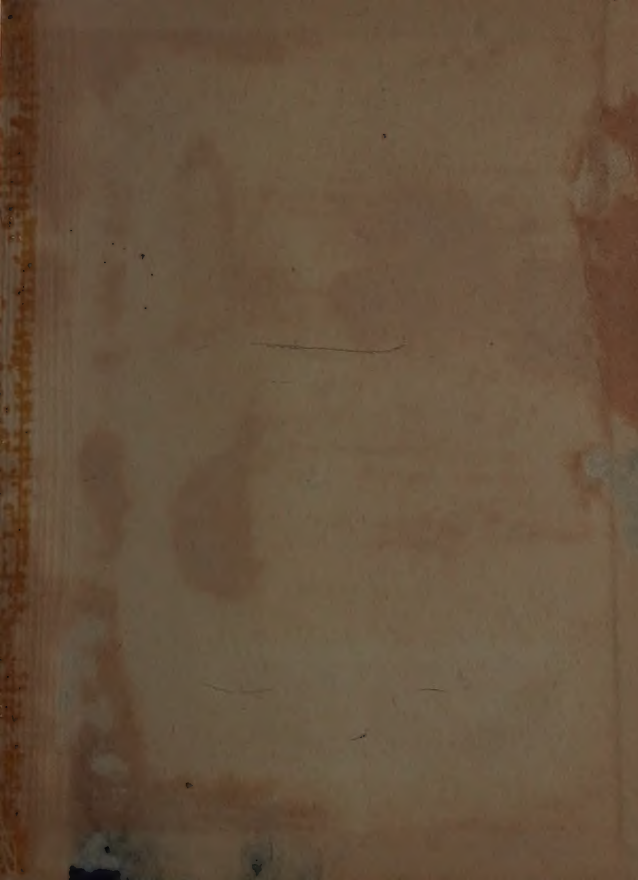
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